Hunsbury Park Primary School

Animals in School Policy

Introduction

Research shows that children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a suitable animal. In addition, many children simply take great enjoyment from interaction with animals.

However, the RSPCA (2020) is opposed to the use of animals for education where distress or suffering is or likely to be caused. The RSPCA believe that children and young people can be taught about animals without keeping pets in the classroom. Schools can be noisy and frightening places for some animals and it is very difficult to look after animals needs properly in a classroom environment. This applies to any animal, including African land snails and fish.

The RSPCA does support observing animals' behaviour in their natural talent habitat. They support the development of a wildlife area in school grounds.

Therefore, at Hunsbury Park, our policy is that we will welcome our animal visitors but that we will not keep animals as pets within the school or classroom. When animals do visit school, this will be done with the welfare of animals as a key priority. There will be constant supervision to ensure the safety of all.

Aims

To ensure that the welfare and needs of any visiting animals are met to the highest standard. Our animal visitors will come into school to support our children's learning and understanding. Mrs Hughes' dog Cookie, visits school to support the social and emotional well-being of pupils.

Curriculum links

Each class, when planning the curriculum, will look for opportunities to engage with the animal world. Within Forest School, children engage with the natural world during their sessions.
Of-site visits
EYFS undertake an annual visit to a farm to support their curriculum. The children will observe a range of farm animals and investigate how they are cared for. They will begin to develop an understanding of the responsibility for animal welfare. They will be opportunities to link with differing opinions: vegetarianism, veganism, animal right and sustainability.

Residential activities

Year 4 pupils visit Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre as part of their science studies. They engage in stream dipping and bug hunting. The children will locate/observe/investigate habitats which may include: badger setts, foxes' dens and squirrel eating tables. The children will develop their understanding of the responsibilities of ensuring animals are handled with care and returned to their natural habitat.

How visits may be authorised

The class teacher will liaise with the bursar, office manager, key stage leaders, deputy/head teachers and the EVC in order to ensure that the needs of the animals are considered (risk assessments), the health of the pupils and staff are considered (allergies/medical needs) and that any costs are budgeted for.

Risk assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment will be carried out by the group leader BEFORE the proposed visit. It will assess the risks that might be encountered from the visit and will indicate measures to prevent or reduce them. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- What are the welfare needs of the animal?
- Has the visiting animal owners provided their own risk assessment?
- Does the visiting owner have personal liability insurance?
- What are the hazards?
- Who might be affected by them?
- What safety measures are needed to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps will be taken in an emergency?
- Which children/staff have allergies (in class and whole school)?

Each animal MUST have their own risk assessment. The provider MUST provide a risk assessment BEFORE any visit takes place. The EVC is responsible for reviewing these.

Communication with parents

The parents of children and staff should be notified in advance of an animal visiting. This could be done through letters home/parentmail/classdojo/seesaw. Whilst a formal agreement is not always necessary, it is good practise at Hunsbury Park Primary School for parents to sign reply slips as evidence that they have read, and received, the information.

Further health and safety considerations

At the earliest planning stage, the visit leader must discuss with the office and look at the medical details on Arbor/Medical Tracker to ensure any needs/concerns are raised in a timely manner.

Prior to an activity, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual child is likely to compromise animal welfare or the safety of others. The visit leader should discuss with the Head teacher, Senior Leaders and SENCO the possibility of making additional arrangements for that child(ren).

Visit Leaders' planning

Visit Leaders must read thoroughly the appropriate guidance for animals in school. All paperwork should be filed within the school system.

Visit plan

The visit plan for intended animal visits must include the following:

- how the welfare of the animals will be met
- is insurance suitable
- risk assessment
- pre-visit discussion with office/bursar/senior leader and EVC
- applications for approval of visit

- medical needs of children AND adults
- where the activity will take place
- fire precautions/emergency and evacuation procedures;
- intended arrangements for supervision
- general communications information and guidance for supporting staff

Al plans are to be submitted to the EVC before the visit takes place.

Monitoring and review

Visit leaders are encouraged to review visits, taking into account the successful and less successful parts of the visit, and considering ways in which the visit could have been improved. This should be documented as part of the visit plan.

This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

Appendix

RSPCA guidelines
Planning framework
Generic risk assessment
Letter to parents

Animal-friendly schools

How can schools be animal-friendly?

Animal-friendly schools do more than just teach about animals. They encourage both teachers and pupils to think about animals' needs and to develop a sense of care and responsibility for them.

The benefits

An animal-friendly school:

- promotes a sense of responsibility and respect towards all living things

- teaches pupils about animals and their needs

- is aware of and abides by animal welfare legislation

- looks at important contemporary moral and ethical issues like animal experimentation and the effect of humans on the environment

- encourages empathy and understanding of animals

- is relevant to everyday life.

How the RSPCA can help

- The RSPCA's free education service supports teachers to develop informed, responsible and active citizens, and helps schools to become more animal-friendly.

- Our education website – www.rspca.org.uk/education – has a variety of resources, linked to the English and Welsh curricula, which are free to download and include factsheets, activity sheets and photos.

- We have a team of education training and development advisers who can arrange ITT and INSET sessions to demonstrate how animal welfare can be used as a focus or context for the delivery of the National Curriculum. For contact details, visit www.rspca.org.uk/education

Areas to think about

Curriculum opportunities

- Animal welfare can be a cross-curricular topic or integrated into a specific subject such as science, citizenship or PSHE and English.

- The current citizenship curriculum offers specific opportunities for teaching animal welfare topics at primary and secondary level.

- Visit **www.rspca.org.uk/education** for more information.

After-school clubs

- Animal welfare could be a priority for after-school clubs – children and young people with a special interest in animals will be eager to learn how to look after them properly.

- Visit **www.rspca.org.uk** and look at The Den site.

Supporting teachers to develop informed, responsible and active citizens

Animals in schools

- The RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals for education where distress or suffering is or is likely to be caused. The RSPCA believes children and young people can be taught about animals without keeping pets in the classroom.

- Some alternatives to using real animals include:
  - ✓ soft toys and props
  - ✓ role play and drama activities
  - ✓ books, videos, DVDs and CD-ROMs
  - ✓ observing animals' behaviour in their natural habitat
  - ✓ developing a wildlife area in the school grounds.

- The RSPCA strongly discourages the keeping of animals in schools. Schools can be noisy and frightening places for some animals and it is very difficult to look after any animal's needs properly in a classroom environment. This applies to any animal, including African land snails and fish.

- Any members of the school's staff who are responsible for an animal or animals being on the school premises – whether on a permanent or temporary basis – are now subject, as a result of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, to the legal obligation to ensure that those animals' needs are met. These include:
  - ✓ its need for a suitable environment
  - ✓ its need for a suitable diet (food and fresh water)
  - ✓ its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
  - ✓ any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
  - ✓ its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

  These responsibilities do not end when the school day ends, but continue so long as the animal remains at school and include evenings, weekends and holidays. Personal responsibility exists irrespective of whether the animal in question was purchased by the school or is owned by one of the pupils or their parents. If an animal's needs are not being adequately met whilst at school, criminal prosecutions could in theory be brought against all persons over the age of 16 who had responsibility for that animal, including school staff.

- Visit http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/general for information on the specific needs of animals kept as pets.

Breeding animals in school

- The RSPCA opposes breeding animals in schools. This includes the use of egg incubators, butterfly and snail breeding kits, worms, ants and frogspawn.

- It is difficult to guarantee the welfare of animals bred in the school environment and the RSPCA believes that such programmes of study do not promote responsible attitudes to animal care and husbandry.

Dissection

- The RSPCA is opposed to the dissection of vertebrate and invertebrate animals in schools and believes the dissection of any animal in school – including invertebrates – can lead to desensitisation and a lessening of respect for life among pupils.

- Alternatives for teaching animal anatomy include models, videos and computer simulations.

Visitors with animals and animal events

- Many visiting speaker schemes and other animal-related events do not put the animals' needs first.

- Animals are often transported in unsuitable conditions, and the noise and unfamiliarity of a school environment can cause them distress.

- The RSPCA is opposed to events and fundraisers at schools involving animals as their welfare cannot be guaranteed at all times. These include donkey derbies, pig, sheep and snail racing, birds of prey displays, pet shows and events where animals are used as prizes.

- It is illegal to offer an animal as a prize to a person under 16 who is not accompanied by an adult, except in limited circumstances provided in the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

- Balloon releases may be fun but the balloons can harm the environment and animals if they eat them.

- Alternatives to animal-related events include:
  - ✓ sponsored litter clearances
  - ✓ sponsored dog walks
  - ✓ a photographic pet show where pupils can bring in pictures of their pets or favourite animals.

The school environment

Some of these ideas might be suitable for **school councils** to consider:

- **School grounds**
  The RSPCA recommends that you develop your school grounds to make them more animal-friendly. This includes removing litter and other hazards and managing areas to encourage and protect wildlife. For more information see the 'school grounds' lesson resources on **www.rspca.org.uk/education**

- Wildlife and conservation areas in school grounds will attract a wide range of wildlife. Pupils can learn about the animals and their habitats and explore environmental issues such as biodiversity and interdependence.

- **Litter**
  Every day, RSPCA inspectors rescue pets and wild animals trapped or hurt by litter. Even rubbish that has been put in a rubbish bin may end up on an open landfill site and could be a danger to animals.

- Find out what happens to the waste from your school. Encourage recycling and make sure the waste is safe for animals:
  - ✓ Plastic can holders can choke – cut them up
  - ✓ Plastic bags can suffocate – tie a knot in them and dispose of them properly
  - ✓ Broken bottles can cut – recycle safely
  - ✓ Tin cans can trap – take the lids off, put them inside and pinch the opening shut
  - ✓ Balloons can kill if eaten – avoid balloon releases and cut up used balloons

- **Food**
  The RSPCA is opposed to all forms of farming that cause distress or suffering, or deprive an animal of the opportunity to express natural behaviour.

- The RSPCA works to encourage changes in attitudes to farm animals and the development and implementation of systems that satisfy the specific physical and behavioural needs of individual species.

- Freedom Food, set up by the RSPCA, is a farm assurance scheme that concentrates primarily on animal welfare. The RSPCA sets the standards for each of the species covered and these are based on scientific research, veterinary advice and practical farming experience. Freedom Food-labelled products are produced on farms inspected to RSPCA welfare standards. For more information see **www.freedomfood.co.uk**

- Encourage school catering providers to introduce menus that are more animal-friendly (e.g. using Freedom Food-labelled farm products).

- **Cleaning products**
  Encourage cleaning and catering staff to use cleaning products that have not been tested on animals.

- The RSPCA is opposed to the use of animals in the testing of inessential items, such as cosmetics and toiletries, non-medical products such as garden chemicals, DIY products, pesticides, household products and food additives.

- We support the development of techniques that will result in the principles of 'the 3 Rs':
  - ✓ replacement - methods that avoid or replace the use of animals
  - ✓ reduction - minimising the numbers of animals used
  - ✓ refinement - improving experimental procedures, and other factors affecting animals such as their housing and care, to reduce suffering and improve welfare throughout the animals' lives.

Code of conduct

- The RSPCA recommends that schools draw up a code of conduct for studying animals in their natural habitats. For example:
  - ✓ show respect for animals and the places where they live
  - ✓ never handle animals – draw pictures or take photos instead
  - ✓ move quietly and slowly so you do not disturb animals – and take care not to step on any animals that crawl/fly away
  - ✓ leave animals' homes exactly as you found them – if you turn over rocks and logs put them back the way you found them
  - ✓ do not drop litter.

School trips

- Observing animals in captivity, including zoos, farm and safari parks, rescue centres and sanctuaries, raises a number of animal welfare questions:
  - ✓ Are the animals behaving naturally?
  - ✓ Are their needs being met?
  - ✓ What are pupils learning about the animals and their needs from seeing them in captivity?

- The RSPCA recommends using the following checklist before taking pupils to an animal venue:
  - ✓ Visit the venue before the trip to assess animal welfare issues that may be raised and identify any health and safety considerations.
  - ✓ Ask pupils to think about the animals, their needs and their natural lifestyle before the visit. Identify what they will be looking for and why.
  - ✓ Draw up a code of conduct for the visit with pupils to ensure that disturbance to animals and their homes is kept to a minimum.
  - ✓ Highlight the animals' needs and question whether they are being met throughout the visit – encourage students to focus on the quality of the animals' environments.
  - ✓ Follow up any animal welfare issues raised after the visit.

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Dear parent/carer................

Risk benefit of visit

Type of visit planned

Type of animals included

Suggested cost – paid by parentmail

Pupils in receipt of free school meals pay 50%

Date monies to be returned by

Date form to be returned by

Visit leader

Name of child....................……………………………………. Class.....................

I have read the letter regarding the visit

I have paid by parentmail

I would like to discuss this visit

Signed.. Date...

Planning framework   **ANIMAL –**

Risk benefit of visit		
Type of visit		
Pre-visit discussion with EVC/SLT		
Visit approved by		
Date of visit		
Location		
Visit Leader		
Owner		
Parents informed of visit. Please include a copy of the details: Letter/parentmail/classdojo		
How does the animal owners' insurance support the visit? Include details/photocopy		
What are the welfare needs of the animal(s)? Include a copy of specific risk assessment		
Has the whole school been made aware of the visit? (whole school email, staff noticeboard)		