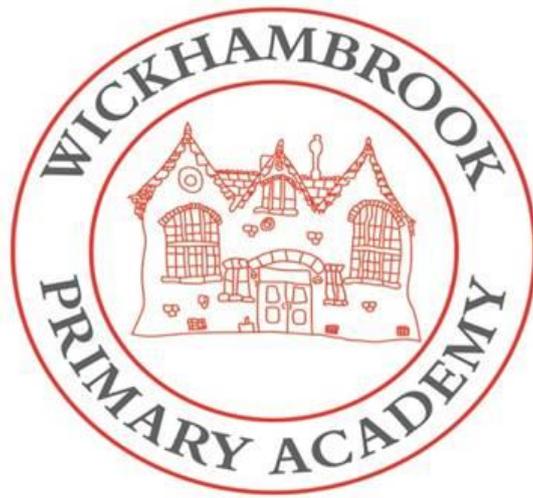


Wickhambrook Primary Academy



EVERY CHILD EVERY OPPORTUNITY EVERY DAY

Pet Policy

**Written: Spring Term 2021
To be reviewed: Spring Term 2022**

Rationale for having Pets in School

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.

School pets may:

- motivate children to think and to learn, as they have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- encourage a respect and reverence for life in children and thereby improve their relationships with their peers, parents and teachers
- foster a sense of responsibility in children
- teach children to nurture and respect life

The benefits of school pets are far reaching and can be broken down into the following development aspects:

- **Cognitive development** – companionship with a pet stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing.
- **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 give relief from anxiety.
- **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.
- **Environmental benefits** – a pet contributes towards the creation of a home-style family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- **Social benefits** – a school pet provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing, developing social skills and focused interaction with others.

Pets in school also have social benefits for the school community:

- enhance the learning environment, creating a sense of security and family warmth for the pupils
- encourage the involvement of parents and the wider community in school activities help to promote the school as an important nurturing influence in the community. Children naturally identify with animals, we use the children's interactions with animals to teach them how to respect each other and how to show empathy.
- teaching children to respect and protect even the smallest animal is vital to ensure that we support the development of adults who will continue to show a respect for protecting our environment, animals and plants for generations to come. A child's attitude towards animals can support future behaviour; we will teach kindness and empathy towards animals which will foster a positive attitude.

1. Looking After a School Pet

At Wickhambrook Primary Academy we aim to promote good practice in animal care. Children are taught correct procedures in handling and caring for animals under the direct supervision of adults; they are encouraged to take a shared responsibility for the care of the animals.

Children are taught how to interact gently with our school pets. Sensible measures are taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

Wickhambrook Primary Academy:

- The headteacher is responsible for the welfare of all animals in school. They will:
 - oversee relevant guidance relating to each animal and amend practice in response to changing guidance
 - risk assessments will be provided for each different animal
 - oversee all animal care and safety throughout the school, but day to day maintenance and feeding will be overseen by the staff
 - obtain well socialised young animals
 - register all our animals with a local veterinary practice and seek advice and treatment when appropriate
 - ensure that each animal enjoys an optimum environment
 - practise routine preventive health measures as advised by vets for example vaccination, flea prevention and worm control where appropriate
 - keep pets and their quarters clean and safe at all times
 - make careful arrangements for holiday and weekend care are made
 - provide a high quality, appropriate diet
 - isolate and treat any sick animals promptly

Examples of how the pets will be used in school

- Reading programmes: Children may read aloud to the school pets.
- Thrive approach: school pets can be used to teach empathy and responsibility.
- Reward: Children may be rewarded with time with the school pets.
- Walking, cleaning out the environment, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities that children will be allowed to undertake.

2. Health and safety

Children's parents or carers sign a consent form for the school pets during induction. This will allow parents to indicate whether they give consent for their child to be in contact with school pets. Any allergies are also highlighted during children's induction, which should alert us to allergies to other pets.

The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low. However, allergic reactions to mammals, birds and animals cannot be discounted. These might result from handling the animals or being in close proximity and be detected by the development of skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties.

Staff will watch for the development of allergic reactions in pupils who come into contact with the animals. Children known to have allergic reactions to specific animals will have restricted access to those that may trigger a response.

When animals are handled, good hygiene will be practiced.

When handling animals:

- children will not consume food or drink
- children will wash their hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals