

Animals in Nursery Policy & Procedure

EYFS Requirement

This policy has been written in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding and Welfare requirements (sections 3.4 - 3.8)

Related Policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Supporting Individual Children
- Settling In and Transition
- Equality and Inclusion
- Parents as Partners

Legislation

- Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2023)
- Children Act 1989 Children Act 2004 (Every Child Matters)
- Children Act 2006
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Animal welfare: 2010 to 2015 government policy
- Health and Safety Regulations (2003)
- Health Protection Agency (2002) Guidelines for the control of Infection and Communicable Diseases in nurseries and other Institutional early years Settings in South West London Sector. (2003) South West London Health Protection Unit

Our Aim

To provide children with the rich learning opportunity of having real life animals in the nursery setting. While some children may have pets at home, many children don't owing to the busy nature of many families' lives. We would like the children to have the opportunity to meet many different types of animals during their time at our setting. We aim to ensure that this is in accordance with sensible hygiene and safety controls.

Frank will be the nursery's resident pet and spend his time in the office with Lucy, the nursery manager/his owner. Frank the nursery support dog will also be a useful tool to support children how to be around dogs and how to be respectful and meet their needs within a safe environment.

Benefits:

Many educational settings recognise the beneficial effects that animal encounters hold for children too. The role of animals, especially pets, has recently been the focus of developmental research; theories and models of child development concentrate on different aspects of development in the light of relationships with animals. Research data indicates that having a pet is positively correlated with feelings of importance, social competence and self-esteem. In addition, significant differences have been found between pet owners and non-owners: there are higher levels of self-concept, self-esteem and autonomy in pre-adolescent pet owners (Covert et al. 1985; Davis and Juhasz 1985; Davis 1987; Van Houtte and

Jarvis 1995). Children with pets, it seems, are better socially integrated, have wider social networks and are more popular with their classmates too (Endenburg and Baarda 1995).

The care of pets can also promote certain social values and skills in children (empathy and pro-social behaviour), taking responsibilities as well as acquisition of certain habits (tidiness, punctuality, self-discipline), which contribute greatly to better coping skills both at home and in educational environments (Bryant 1985; Melson and Fogel 1988; Poresky and Hendrix 1990). Poresky et al. associated improved cognitive development with the bond between children and pets, and it has been suggested that pet ownership might facilitate language acquisition and enhance verbal skills in children. Positive relationships with pets can aid in the development of trusting relationships with others. A good relationship with a pet can also nurture non-verbal communication, compassion and empathy. Pets can serve different purposes for children: they can be safe keepers of secrets and private thoughts; they provide lessons about life (reproduction, birth, illnesses, accidents, death, and bereavement); they provide a connection to nature; and they can teach respect for all living things. They make loyal, lovable friends and owning them fulfils basic physical and emotional needs – from physical activity, comfort, contact and affection to experience with loss.

The animals provide the opportunity to:

- Understand how animals can also support and help people - guide dogs in training have visited us in nursery before.
- Understand life cycles - caterpillars/butterflies kept every spring.
- Help children understand that not all animals are child friendly and they should always check with the animal's owner before attempting to stroke or handle them.
- Consider the needs of others. Help children build empathy and use the animals to help regulate their feelings and emotions.
- Some research has even shown support with cognitive development in young infants.

Procedure:

- We take account of the views of parents and children when selecting an animal or creature to keep as a pet in the setting.
- We carry out a risk assessment with a knowledgeable person accounting for any hygiene, allergies or safety risks posed by the animal or creature.
- We provide suitable housing for the animal or creature and ensure it is cleaned out regularly and kept safely.
- We ensure the correct food is offered at the right times.
- We make arrangements for weekend and holiday care for the animal or creature.
- Children are taught correct handling and care of the animal or creature and are always supervised.
- Children wash their hands after handling the animal or creature and do not have contact with animal soil or soiled bedding.
- Staff wear disposable gloves when cleaning housing or handling soiled bedding.
- If animals or creatures are brought in by visitors or parents they are the responsibility of the owner. The owner of a pet visiting the nursery will carry out a risk assessment, detailing how the animal or creature is to be handled and how any safety or hygiene issues will be addressed.
- All parents are notified of the animals at the nursery upon the show around. Any children who have confirmed allergies are taken into consideration. On the days that the children with allergies attend the nursery, the animals will be kept away from certain areas of the nursery.

- Staff are fully aware of the importance of health and hygiene procedures when children are in contact with the animals.
- Staff will guide and monitor that the children do not put their hands near the animal's faces. When they have been in contact with the pets, the children are encouraged to wash their hands with antibacterial soap before continuing with normal daily routines to prevent the spread of germs.
- Children are never left unsupervised with the animals.

Frank:

- Frank is a Staffador (Labrador x Staffordshire terrier) and was born August 2018.
- Frank is fully vaccinated, wormed, flead and is registered with the local vet.
- Frank is waiting to be assessed as a registered Therapy Dog through Pets As Therapy.
- Frank is groomed regularly.
- Frank's owner Lucy Pottinger is liable and Frank is fully insured for public liability.
- Frank is permitted in the office and entrance way. His interaction with children has to be 1:1, Lucy with Frank and another staff member with the child.
- Frank has access to water which isn't in an area the children are permitted. Frank also has treats at nursery which are stored away from the children. These treats are also stored away in areas that won't attract pests.

References and Further Reading:

Bryant, B. K. The richness of the child pet relationship: A consideration of both benefits and costs of pets to children. *Anthrozoos*, 3(4) (1990)

Covert, A. M., Whiren, A. P., Keith, J. and Nelson, C. Pets, early adolescents and families. *Marriage and Family Review* 8 (1985)

Davis, J. H. and Juhasz, A. M. The preadolescent pet bond and psychological development. *Marriage and Family Review* 8 (1985)

Endenburg N. and Baarda B. The role of pets in enhancing human well-being: Effects on child development. In *The Waltham Book of Human-Animal Interaction: Benefits and Responsibilities of Pet Ownership*, ed. I. H. Robinson (1995)

Melson, G. F. The role of pets in the development of children's nurturance. Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Delta Society (1987)

Poresky, R. H. and Hendrix, C. Developmental benefits of pets for young children. Paper presented at the Delta Society 7th Annual Conference (1990)

Van Houtte, B. and Jarvis, P. A. The role of pets in pre-adolescent psychosocial development. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 16 (1995)

This policy will be reviewed by management annually, who are responsible for ensuring the dissemination of this policy to all staff, volunteers and parents.