



Falkner House Pets Policy (Dogs and Guinea Pigs)

- Nursery - Year 6 including EYFS

Introduction

Falkner House School recognises the many educational, emotional and social benefits that can arise from children interacting with well-trained and appropriately supervised pets. Research has shown that contact with animals can help children develop empathy, responsibility, confidence and emotional wellbeing. The presence of a school dog and guinea pig can also support a calm and positive learning environment, encouraging children to develop respect, kindness and an understanding of animal welfare.

This policy sets out the arrangements for the safe management of school dogs across Falkner House School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and should be read in conjunction with the school's Risk Assessment and Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Allergy Policy and First Aid arrangements.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any pet present on school premises is managed safely and responsibly and that the welfare of both children and animals is protected at all times. The school is committed to ensuring that interactions between pupils and pets are positive experiences which enhance children's learning while minimising any potential risks.

Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the Principal. Day-to-day responsibility for the welfare, supervision and management of the school dogs and guinea pigs rests with the designated owner. The school will ensure that all adults responsible for the dogs and guinea pigs are familiar with this policy, the associated risk assessment and the procedures for responding to any incidents involving the animals.

The Bursar is responsible for ensuring that a suitable risk assessment is maintained and reviewed at least annually, or sooner if circumstances change. All staff are expected to follow the requirements of this policy and report any concerns regarding the welfare or behaviour of a dog or guinea pig immediately.

General Arrangements

School dogs may be present across the Falkner House buildings as part of normal school life. Parents, staff, pupils and visitors are informed that dogs may be present on the premises. The school recognises that not all individuals are comfortable around dogs and will make reasonable adjustments where necessary to accommodate allergies, medical conditions, cultural considerations or concerns relating to dogs. The guinea pigs are kept in a cage with appropriate food, water and bedding but may be taken out by the children under supervision.

The school reserves the right to restrict or withdraw access to any dog at any time should concerns arise regarding safety, welfare or suitability.



Health and Welfare of the Dogs and Guinea Pigs

The welfare of the pets is of paramount importance. All school dogs must be well-socialised, appropriately trained and have a temperament suitable for working within a school environment. The dog owner must ensure that their dog receives regular veterinary care and that vaccinations, flea treatments and worming programmes are maintained in accordance with veterinary advice.

Any dog or guinea pig that is unwell, injured, distressed or displaying signs of illness will not attend school. The dog owner will ensure that dogs have access to fresh water, suitable rest periods and an environment that supports their physical and emotional wellbeing.

The school is committed to meeting the welfare requirements set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This includes providing a suitable environment, an appropriate diet, opportunities to display normal behaviour patterns, suitable social interaction and protection from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

Supervision and Interaction with Pupils

Pupils are never left alone with a school pet under any circumstances. All interactions between children and pets take place under the direct supervision of a responsible adult. Staff will ensure that children understand how to behave safely and respectfully around dogs and guinea pigs and will reinforce these expectations regularly.

Children are encouraged to remain calm when near an animal and to approach them in an appropriate manner. Pupils are taught not to make sudden movements, shout, crowd around an animal or engage in rough play. They are also instructed not to place their face close to an animal's face or disturb a dog when it is resting, sleeping or eating.

Where a dog appears uncomfortable, anxious or overwhelmed, the supervising adult will immediately remove the dog from the situation. Staff responsible for the dogs are expected to recognise signs of stress or anxiety, including growling, baring teeth, flattened ears, lowered tail posture, excessive panting, whining, attempts to hide or other behavioural changes that may indicate discomfort.

Hygiene and Infection Control

Appropriate hygiene procedures are essential whenever animals are present within a school environment. Pupils and staff must wash their hands thoroughly after handling an animal or coming into contact with equipment used by the animals.

Children are not permitted to feed the animals unless this forms part of a planned and supervised activity. Pupils should not eat food while interacting with a pet and dogs will not be permitted in areas where food is being prepared.

Any dog or animal waste will be removed immediately by a responsible adult and disposed of appropriately in accordance with hygiene and health and safety requirements. Areas contaminated by animal waste will be cleaned and disinfected promptly.

Allergies and Medical Considerations - please see Allergy Policy

The school recognises that some pupils and staff may have allergies, phobias or medical conditions relating to dogs. Information regarding such concerns will be considered when determining appropriate arrangements for pupils, staff and visitors.

Reasonable steps will be taken to minimise contact where necessary, including the designation of dog-free areas and the implementation of individual risk assessments where appropriate.

Safeguarding Considerations

The presence of a school dog does not replace the school's safeguarding responsibilities. Dogs are not used as a substitute for effective behaviour management, supervision or pastoral care. Participation in activities involving a school pet is voluntary, and no pupil will be required to interact with a pet if they do not wish to do so.

Particular consideration will be given to the needs of younger children, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and those who may be anxious or fearful around animals.



Incident Management

Any incident involving a school dog, including bites, scratches, aggressive behaviour, near misses or concerns regarding welfare, must be reported immediately to the Principal or another senior member of staff. The incident will be recorded in accordance with the school's accident and incident reporting procedures and investigated as appropriate.

Where necessary, parents will be informed, medical assistance sought and a review undertaken to determine whether any changes are required to existing arrangements or risk assessments.

Insurance and Risk Assessment

The school will maintain appropriate insurance arrangements relating to the presence of dogs on school premises. A comprehensive risk assessment covering the management of school dogs will be maintained and reviewed annually or following any significant incident.

The risk assessment will consider safeguarding, health and safety, animal welfare, allergies, supervision arrangements and emergency procedures.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal or sooner if changes in legislation, guidance or school practice require amendment. The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored through ongoing review of risk assessments, incident records and feedback from staff, pupils and parents.