

1. Purpose

This policy provides clear guidance on the presence of animals—including staff-owned pets—on school premises. It aims to safeguard health and safety while recognizing the significant educational and emotional benefits animals can provide, especially for vulnerable students.

2. Rationale

Animals in schools can:

- Reduce anxiety and stress among students and staff
- Improve attendance, engagement, and motivation, particularly for students with special educational needs or social-emotional challenges
- Support positive behaviour, empathy, and responsibility
- Enhance learning experiences through animal-related curriculum links

These benefits are particularly valuable for vulnerable pupils, including those with mental health needs, trauma histories, neurodivergence, or difficulty with social relationships.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all animals brought onto school property by staff, students, parents, or external visitors during school hours or school-sponsored events.

4. Approved Animal Categories

Animals permitted on school grounds fall into the following categories:

4.a) Service Animals¹

Animals trained to assist individuals with disabilities, in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 where applicable.

4.b) Therapy Animals

¹ Service animals, including assistance dogs, must be accommodated in accordance with the **Equality Act 2010**. Schools have a legal duty to make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled students or staff who rely on assistance dogs, especially where this is part of an **Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**

Animals used as part of approved wellbeing or mental health support programmes. Therapy animals must be certified by a recognised organisation and covered by public liability insurance, as required by most education authorities. Insurance should cover injury or property damage resulting from the animal's presence.

4.c) Educational Animals

Animals brought in temporarily to support curriculum delivery or school-wide projects. This includes animals involved in lessons, science units, or wellbeing activities.

4.d) Classroom Pets

Animals kept in classrooms as part of a planned educational or wellbeing initiative. These require prior approval from leadership and clear care plans.

4.e) Staff Personal Pets

Staff may request to bring their own pets to school under conditions, outlined in Section 6.

5. General Requirements (All Animals)

All animals must be risk-assessed prior to entry, and handlers must follow Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on hygiene, supervision, and zoonotic disease prevention. Animals must not be allowed in food preparation areas or unsupervised around vulnerable individuals.

In addition, all animals must meet the following criteria:

- Must be healthy, well-socialised, and have a history of non-aggressive behaviour
- Must be fully vaccinated (if applicable) and regularly treated for parasites/worms or similar
- Must be supervised at all times
- Must not cause disruption or distress to students or staff
- Must never be left unattended in classrooms or offices unless specifically approved

6. Staff-Owned Pets

Staff members may request to bring personal pets to school, especially if:

- The animal contributes to school wellbeing or therapeutic programmes
- The pet has a calm, predictable temperament
- There is a clear benefit to student support or staff wellbeing

Staff Pet Approval Process:

- Reason for bringing the animal
- Vaccination records
- Insurance confirmation (public liability where applicable)

Staff must complete a formal risk assessment before bringing pets onto school grounds.

Approval is subject to:

- Ongoing adherence to all school policies
- The pet's temperament, health status, and the absence of any known behavioural risks
- The school reserves the right to revoke approval at any time if issues arise.

7. Consideration of Allergies & Phobias

Teachers must consult with students prior to introducing animals to a classroom.

Reasonable adjustments must be made for students or staff with allergies, phobias, or cultural/religious sensitivities. Alternative activities or opt-outs must always be available.

8. Prohibited Animals

The following are not permitted:

- Dangerous or exotic animals (e.g. venomous species, large reptiles)
- Animals not legally permitted in educational settings
- Animals with a history of aggression or unpredictability

9. Supervision & Welfare

- Animals must always be under adult supervision.
- Students must be instructed on safe and respectful handling.
- Adequate handwashing facilities must be available and used after contact.
- Classroom pets must have clearly assigned care routines (including holiday/weekend care).

10. Liability & Insurance

Owners (including staff) are fully responsible for their animal's care, control, and any resulting incidents.

Staff bringing animals must have suitable insurance where required. Proof of insurance must be submitted annually.

11. Breach of Policy

Failure to follow this policy may result in:

- Immediate removal of the animal from school grounds
- Disciplinary action if appropriate
- Review of permissions for animals on school site

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team and updated as needed in consultation with staff and all other relevant stakeholders.