



1. Rationale

We feel strongly that children can benefit educationally and emotionally through engagement with animals. It increases their understanding of responsibility and develops empathy and nurturing skills. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with them.

2. Introduction

At Priory we are fortunate as we have several pets including Bruce the Boston terrier, Genie the French bulldog, a tortoise, fish, axolotls, geckos, a snake, parakeets, ducks and chickens. The small pets live in the entrance area and Year 6. The chickens and ducks are housed near the Year 3/4 entrance in a safe, enclosed area. Children can observe them at times throughout the day and classes are taught about them.

3. Purpose

There is a great deal of research into the positive impact that animals can have for a range of reasons. The main reasons we focus on are:

- **To support attendance:** Children are encouraged into school to see or care for animals.
- **To support behaviour:** Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and demonstrate empathy which helps them better understand how classmates may feel.
- **To support emotional development:** Animals can be a friend for pupils to talk to about their problems or to help pupils to calm.
- **To support social development:** Dogs are especially useful for building self-esteem; learning about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. With the presence of a 'calm and well-trained dog,' students find social support and peer interaction.
- **To support reading:** Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud.
- **To support individuals:** Bruce can work with pupils on a one-one basis (under adult supervision) to support children going through upsetting/difficult times or even those who are scared/phobic of dogs.
- **As a reward:** All the animals are interesting to spend time with in different ways. Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Children could be rewarded with spending time with the animals. They can feed, groom, play with and care for them. They can also be involved with walking and training Bruce.



4. Risk and Safety

Of course there is a risk when owning animals, but for the vast majority of children, the benefits by far outweigh them. As with all risks we assess them and do our best to reduce and manage them. We have a general pet risk assessment in place along with individual ones for the chickens/ducks and dogs.

In order to reduce risk we have a record of all children who are allergic to any animals and this is updated annually. If any child has a severe allergy or parents have concerns we ask that they contact the school to arrange a meeting. We can then work together to manage and reduce risk for individual pupils. If necessary, pupils will be provided with an individual Care Plan that will be shared with all relevant staff.

Children are trained in how to handle and treat all animals. This happens in class for most pets, in assemblies for the dog and during Animal Club for the chickens.

5. Roles

Mr Facey and Miss Keen are responsible for fulfilling and updating this policy and all risk assessments. Class teachers are responsible for any pets they have in their classroom. They must fulfil all requirements in the Risk Assessment. Pets are always purchased with the agreement of the Headteacher. Pets are always kept in good health and vets consulted when necessary. Children are regularly taught and reminded of all hygiene, safety and care rules.

6. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be reviewed regularly by Mr Facey and Miss Keen. This policy will be reviewed by Senior Leaders and the Governing body every two years or sooner if necessary.

6. Related Policies

- Health and Safety

Policy Author: Pam Keen

Date due for Review: November 2023