



ST EDMUND'S SCHOOL CANTERBURY

Handling & Bringing Animals into School Policy

1. Background

The School recognises its responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) to provide a safe working environment for all members of our community. A key part of this is the assessment and management of risk.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026). Any activities involving animals must prioritise pupil welfare, including physical, emotional, and safeguarding considerations.

This policy is prepared in accordance with:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)
- Independent School Standards Regulations (current version)
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (as amended)
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (where applicable)
- Equality Act 2010
- UK Health Security Agency guidance relating to zoonotic disease

This policy does not apply to assistance dogs accompanying disabled pupils, staff or visitors. Requests relating to assistance dogs will be considered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the School's Equality Policy.

2. Bringing Pets on to the School Site

In general, the School asks that staff, pupil or family pets are not brought on to the School site. The School is a professional working environment and we seek to manage risks posed to our community. Domestic pets may bite or scratch pupils or staff, cause illness through fouling, trigger potentially serious allergic reactions or cause disruption to the normal running of the School. Our primary duty to safeguard our community and we have a responsibility under legislation to minimise such risks. For clarification, a member of staff, pupil or parent seeking to bring a domestic pet on to the School site must have the written permission of the Bursar (or the Head). The Designated Safeguarding Lead

(DSL) must also be consulted before animals are brought into school to ensure safeguarding, welfare, and medical records are appropriately checked. A written risk assessment, approved by the Bursar/Head (and DSL where relevant), must be completed for each occasion animals are brought into school. This should include reference to:

- allergies
- safeguarding
- behaviour of the animal
- infection risks
- supervision
- emergency arrangements
- escape procedures
- cleaning arrangements
- welfare needs

The School will ensure that any animals kept or brought onto site are cared for in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and their welfare needs are met at all times.

The School will ensure that activities involving animals fall within the School's insurance arrangements or obtain additional cover where necessary.

3. Boarding Staff Pets

Staff who live on site must have the written permission of the Bursar (or the Head) if wish to keep pets in School accommodation. Staff are responsible at all times for the control of their pets (inside and outside) and should seek to avoid bringing them into the working and residential areas of the School wherever possible. The School reserves the right to ask Staff who live on site to remove their pets from the School if they prove in any way problematic in terms of health and safety and/or the normal operations of the School. Any fouling by pets on School property (inside or outside) must be immediately cleaned up and hygienically disposed of. Where staff pets are present in boarding houses, additional safeguarding checks must be carried out to ensure pupil safety, allergy awareness, and appropriate boundaries.

4. Animals in the Classroom Environment

The School recognises that in certain controlled circumstances, staff may wish to bring certain animals onto the School site for educational purposes. This may be particularly relevant in Science lessons. In these instances, the following guidance must always be followed by staff and pupils:

5. Handling Animals

If animals will be handled, the most important issue is the maintenance of good hygiene.

When handling animals:

- Staff and pupils must not consume food or drink
- Should cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings
- Wash hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals
- Keep animals away from the face

Careful handling of small mammals and other animals is most important; the animals should be restrained sufficiently so that, they cannot damage themselves or the handler.

Mammals should be handled daily if possible (unless breeding or nursing when they should be disturbed as little as possible).

Gloves need not normally be worn unless it is known that an animal for one reason or another is likely to bite or scratch. In this situation a pair of rubber gloves which does not particularly reduce dexterity, is a sensible precaution.

Handling small animals should always be carried out over a table or trough filled with a soft material such as sand / sawdust.

6. Physical injuries

There is always the danger of bites and scratches, and teachers or technicians should check that any animals kept / brought in are docile, friendly and gentle in the presence of children.

7. Diseases, parasites and allergies

The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low. However allergic reactions to mammals, birds and a few other animals are possible. These might result from handling the animals or just from being near them and be detected by the development of skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties. Staff planning to use animals in the classroom should first consult the School medical records to ascertain if any pupils might have an allergic reaction.

Teachers should be vigilant for the development of allergic reactions in pupils who come into contact with the animals.

Children known to have allergic reactions to specific animals must, of course, have restricted access to those that may trigger a response.

Salmonella bacteria may be carried by reptiles; good hygiene is again required, especially if aquatic reptiles, such as terrapins, are kept. Good general hygiene and hand washing are essential for risk reduction.

Children under five should not have contact with such reptiles or the environment in which the reptiles live or exercise.

Well-being and housing of animals

In addition to the general guidance given above it is important that suitable arrangements are made in advance for the well-being of animals for the short time they are to be on the premises

Animals must be housed properly and safely whilst on the premises, any containers used to transport them must be appropriate and retain the animal securely.

8. Animal Suppliers

The majority of animals available through reputable suppliers present no hazards that good hygiene procedures cannot address. In order for there to be minimal risk to humans of diseases being transmitted from animals kept in schools, it is important that animals are obtained from accredited or high-quality sources.

9. Animal Health

If animals are not kept in scrupulously clean conditions, or come into contact with other animals from dubious sources, it will no longer be possible to guarantee that the animals will remain in a disease-free condition.

Animals should not be sent home with pupils or other people unless all of the following considerations can be satisfied.

- It can be guaranteed that the animals will be looked after as well as usual
- Whoever is caring for the animals must have all the necessary information, equipment, food, skills, etc
- Parents must have been informed and given their consent
- Steps will be taken to ensure that the school's animals will not be able to come into contact with pet animals (cats, dogs, rodents or other mammals)
- That small mammals cannot come into contact with wild rodents (mice, rats, etc) while off the school premises

10. Cleaning & Hygiene

This is clearly important, both for the health of the animals and for those people looking after them. Hands should be washed *before* and, of course, after cleaning cages, tanks etc. rubber or plastic gloves should preferably be worn. Animal cages and tanks must be cleaned regularly.

11. Soiled Litter Disposal

Soiled litter should ideally be incinerated or sealed in strong plastic bags and placed with other waste in dustbins.

12. Unsuitable Animals

It goes without saying that certain animals present unacceptable risks and should not be brought into schools.

Wild birds and mammals taken, even if legally, from the 'wild' should not be brought into schools directly as they may be harbouring diseases or parasites transmissible to humans.

13. Incident Reporting

Any incident involving an animal on the School site, including bites, scratches, escapes or near misses, must be reported immediately to the member of staff in charge and the Bursar (or Head) as soon as practicable. Appropriate first aid must be administered without delay, and medical assistance sought where necessary. Parents or carers must be informed as soon as reasonably practicable where a pupil has sustained an injury or where an incident has had, or may have had, an impact on the pupil's welfare. All incidents, accidents and near misses involving animals must be recorded in accordance with the School's accident and incident reporting procedures. Following any such incident, the relevant risk assessment must be reviewed and amended where necessary before any further activities involving the animal take place. The School reserves the right to prohibit the continued presence of any animal on site where it is considered to present an unacceptable risk to the health, safety or welfare of pupils, staff or visitors.

1. June 2018
2. September 2018
3. September 2019
4. September 2020
5. September 2021
6. September 2022
7. September 2023
8. September 2024
9. September 2024
10. September 2025
11. September 2026

Review Date:
September 2027

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Governor responsible