



**Eastry Church of
England Primary School,**
Learning and growing, side by side, in God's Love

School Guinea Pig Policy

November 2023

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| Policy lead | Stacey Gillmore |
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| Governor signature | Teaching, Learning & Inclusion Sub-Committee |
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GUINEA PIGS IN SCHOOL POLICY

Introduction

At Eastry Church of England Primary School, we aim to provide a nurturing and supportive environment in order for children to thrive. One way of supporting them in this is to have a variety of pets in school to make this a welcoming and calm environment.

Rationale for having Pets in School

Research has shown that pets can:

- Increase empathy and responsibility in children
- Teach children how to nurture, care and have respect for all life

Aims

- Improve academic achievement by helping children to concentrate and feel calm at school.
- To provide a safe and secure environment where pupils can develop their Social, Emotional and Communication Skills
- To strengthen pupil's emotional well-being enabling them to access learning more readily
- To help pupils re-establish good relationships with their peers and adults and see school as a place to feel included
- To develop the pupil's sense of self, belonging and trust.
- To see an improvement in behaviour, attainment and attendance of pupils.
- To support children in their academic learning (i.e., reading), if needed.

Impact on the pupils

Research has shown that pets can:

- Decrease isolation and depression in children and adults
- Help people to feel calm
- Develop and improve social skills
- Lower anxiety and decrease agitation
- Reduce loneliness
- Help pupils access school, improving attendance, and leave the school calmly

Guidance and Responsibilities

The Government Guidance for the Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities (updated March 2021), Chapter 8: Pets and Animal Contact states:

Pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment. However, contact with animals can pose a risk of infection including gastro-intestinal infection, fungal infections and parasites. Some people, such as pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system, are at greater risk of developing a severe infection. However, sensible measures can be taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

The following is also suggested from the guidance:

Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Headteacher should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal. There should be a written agreement within the school detailing:

- *the types of animals allowed in the school*
- *how to manage them and permitted behaviour whilst on the premises*
- *where they can go and where they cannot go when in the school*
- *any insurance liability of owners and handlers*

Animals should always be supervised when in contact with the children and those handling animals advised to wash their hands immediately afterwards. Animals should have recommended treatments and immunisations, be regularly groomed (including claws trimmed) and checked for signs of infection. Bedding should be laundered regularly.

Following this guidance, Eastry Church of England Primary School have put the following in place:

- Miss Gillmore will oversee relevant guidance relating to each guinea pig and amend practice in response to changing guidance
- Risk assessments and care sheets will be provided for each different animal in school (2 guinea pigs and 1 Cockapoo dog)
- Miss Gillmore will oversee all animal care and safety throughout the school, but day-to-day maintenance and feeding will be shared with others to encourage children to take responsibility for the care of a living being
- Support is always available from Miss Gillmore and Mrs Kemp (parent of a child at Eastry and Guinea Pig breeder).
- Miss Gillmore will monitor their health and happiness and remove the animal from the school to an identified quiet area, if it is needed.
- The health and wellbeing of the animals on our premises is our primary concern.

Health and Safety

- Pupil's parents or carers will be asked to advise in writing the reason why they do not wish their child to have contact with the school pets such as allergies.
- Any allergies are also highlighted during induction, which should alert us to allergies to other pets.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in the care of the school pets although may decline to do so if they wish
- If a pupil or a member of staff are allergic to a school pet, the pet will be moved to another area of the school and interaction discouraged
- If a pupil or a member of staff have a fear of school pet, then support will be provided to overcome the fear (if necessary, professional advice will be sort from Mrs Kemp).

Evaluation

Formal and informal feedback from staff and pupils is regularly requested, collected and acted upon.

Appendices

1. Risk Assessment: guinea pigs