

General Welfare Requirement: Safeguarding and Promoting Children's Welfare

The provider must promote the good health of the children, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when they are ill.

Promoting health and hygiene

1.16 Animals in the setting

Policy Statement for St Joseph's Pre-school

Children learn about the natural world, its animals and other living creatures, as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. There are clear links to personal, social and emotional development in teaching the children about caring for something which is unable to care for itself, being gentle and understanding boundaries such as how best to handle the animals. Looking at life cycles, from birth to death, is also an important part of development for children. To achieve this we endeavour to include contact with animals, or other living creatures, either in the setting or in visits. We aim to ensure that this is in accordance with sensible hygiene and safety controls.

Whenever an animal is bought onto the Pre-school's premises, whether on a short-term or long-term basis, St Joseph's Pre-school will make sure that due consideration is given to ensuring that such needs can sufficiently be met in that environment, including outside of pre-school hours¹.

Where a child has fears or phobias about a particular animal, staff will make appropriate arrangements to ensure the separation of the animal from the child(ren) concerned.

Legal considerations

The *Animal Welfare Act 2006* states that any person responsible for an animal, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, has a legal responsibility to ensure that the animal/s needs are met. These include:

- its need for a suitable environment;
- its need for a suitable diet (food and fresh water);
- its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns;
- any need it has to be housed with or apart from, other animals;
- its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

The *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974* places a duty on employers to safeguard the health, safety and welfare at work of practitioners, children and visitors. This includes an obligation to minimise the risk of the transfer of disease from animals to people. To this end, St Joseph's Pre-school will satisfy themselves that animals are sourced from reputable providers, are kept in a good state of health and that suitable hygiene precautions are followed by everyone coming into contact with the animals. Sick animals will be isolated and advice sought from a vet if considered appropriate.

Dangerous animals, as defined by the *Dangerous Wild Animals (DWA) Act 1976*, may not be brought into the Pre-school. This includes most monkeys and apes, crocodiles, alligators and poisonous snakes. It does not include domestic dogs and cats.

¹ Setting-based animals will only be taken home by staff

Procedures

Animals in the setting as pets

- We take account of the views of parents and children when selecting an animal or creature to visit St Joseph's Pre-school.
- We carry out a risk assessment with a knowledgeable person accounting for any hygiene or safety risks posed by the animal or creature.
- We provide suitable housing for the animal or creature² and ensure this is cleaned out regularly and is kept safely.
- We ensure the correct food is offered at the right times and water is readily available.
- We make arrangements for weekend and holiday care for the animal or creature.
- We make sure all vaccinations and other regular health measures, such as de-worming and treatment for fleas are up-to-date and recorded.
- If animals or creatures are brought in by visitors to show the children they are the responsibility of the owner³. Assurances will be obtained from the owner as to the means of transporting and housing the animal/creature.
- The owner carries out a risk assessment, detailing how the animal or creature is to be handled and how any safety or hygiene issues will be addressed.
- Animals/creatures will be accommodated separately; different species, or individuals of the same species from different litters, will never be placed together in the same cage, vivarium, tank etc. This helps to:
 - ensure the return of each animal/creature to the correct owner;
 - minimise the risk of transmission of disease from one creature to another; and
 - reduce the likelihood of aggression or conflict between compatible animals.

Animal handling

Children will naturally wish to handle animals, but certain considerations will be addressed in advance of any such activities. In particular, St Joseph's Pre-school will check that:

- the animal is unlikely to harbour diseases or parasites;
- the animal is used to being handled;
- the animal is not likely to be stressed by excitable children;
- where there is a correct way to hold an animal/creature, this is taught to the children from the outset and the children are supervised;
- handling of small animals will be carried out over a table or preferably some form of soft surface to minimise the risk of injury caused by falling or being dropped.

The handling of certain animals will be avoided altogether. Those which are nervous, nocturnal or prone to biting and scratching, will be observed and not touched. Other creatures, like invertebrates, are too fragile to be handled any more than absolutely necessary. Sometimes any handling of a pet will be limited to the owner, who will have the necessary expertise to do it properly.

Hygiene, diseases, parasites

The likelihood of diseases being passed on to humans from pet animals varies depending on the type of animal concerned. Domestic animals such as cats and dogs pose a lesser risk than exotic pets such as fish, amphibians, reptiles and birds. In all cases, good hygiene is the key to the safe handling of such pets and their surroundings such as cages, aquariums and vivarium's. To that end, St Joseph's Pre-school will:

² Tailored to its needs in terms of heat, light, space, cleanliness, noise levels, shelter and the possible impact of other animals/creatures and humans in the vicinity

³ It is the owner's responsibility to bring any equipment, food, or water likely to be required during the day.

- ensure that children wash their hands thoroughly after handling the animal or creature and do not have contact with animal soil or soiled bedding;
- where children have touched an exotic animal, its cage or any other equipment, we will endeavour to ensure that they do not touch their hair, clothes (including pockets), door handles or any other items until their hands have been thoroughly cleansed;
- cuts and abrasions on hands and arms will be covered to minimise the risk of infection;
- staff will wear disposable gloves when cleaning housing or handling soiled bedding;
- contaminated surfaces will be properly washed and disinfected;
- the setting's kitchen sink will not be used to bathe exotic pets or to wash cages or equipment. Sinks used for such purposes will be cleaned thoroughly with disinfectant afterwards.

Allergies

Allergic reactions can be triggered by a wide range of animals and indeed plants. The proteins from animals' hair, saliva or urine can cause allergic reactions that may include a range of symptoms, such as irritation to the eyes and airways, asthma or dermatitis.

It is often difficult to avoid the allergens which can come from animals – even where no animals are housed, animal allergens can be transported by people who have been in contact with animals. As such, St Joseph's Pre-school will endeavour to confine the presence of animals to a limit part of the setting's space. The area will be cleaned regularly.

Where staff and/or children are known to have allergies to particular animals, staff will restrict their exposure to any animals which might provoke an allergic reaction. Some allergens can lead to severe reactions including anaphylaxis⁴. In an emergency, medical advice will be sought without delay.

Visits to farms

- Before a visit to a farm a risk assessment is carried out - this may take account of safety factors listed in the farm's own risk assessment which should be viewed.
- The Pre-school's Supervision of children on outings and visits policy is followed⁵.
- Children will wash their hands thoroughly after contact with animals and on their return to the setting.
- Outdoor footwear worn to visit farms are cleaned of mud and debris and should not be worn indoors.
- We advise staff and volunteers who are, or may be, pregnant to avoid contact with ewes and to consult their GP before the visit.

Living Eggs/Incredible Eggs

Annually, the pre-school take part in a hatching programme conducted by a reputable company such as *Living Eggs* who provide chicks and/or *Incredible Eggs* who provide ducks. The companies provide all relevant risk assessments and hatching equipment; these include an incubator and cage which have all of the relevant PAT safety checks conducted prior to being delivered to the setting.

We follow the guidance provided by the company to ensure we are providing the best start for these animals and will seek relevant advice direct from the company or alternatively consult with vets or specialists where applicable.

⁴ St Joseph's Pre-school staff have been trained in how to react to such cases and the use of an epipen

⁵ Policy 1.8

We will follow the guidance within our policy when these hatching programmes are taking place and will conduct a risk assessment every year so that any changes to allergies etc. can be taken into consideration.

We ensure that we responsibly rehome the chickens/ducks once they are hatched, following the advice from *Living Eggs/Incredible Eggs*.

Legal framework

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Animal Welfare Act 1976
- Dangerous Wild Animals (DWA) Act 1976

Further Information

- [Living Eggs - Living Eggs](#)
- [Incredible Eggs – Ethical providers of hatching kits](#)

Further guidance

- *Health and Safety Regulation...a short guide*
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsc13.htm
- HSE leaflet "[Farms are not playgrounds – 10 ways you can get hurt on a farm](#)"
- National Education Union "[Animals in education and guidance on farm visits](#)"

Associated policies and procedures

- No 1.8 Supervision of children on outings and visits

Version Number	Author	Purpose of Change	Date
1.0	K Coupe	Reviewed and page numbered	Sept 2014
2.0	Committee	Reviewed	Sept 2015
3.0	K Coupe	Reviewed, updated and version controlled	01 May 2019 Cttee Mtg
4.0	K Coupe & N Powers	Updated to include • “associated policies and procedures” section as per EY Safeguarding Audit s175/157 2023; and • section re “Living Eggs/Incredible Eggs”	17 July 2023 Chair (A Hitchings)
5.0	K Coupe	Reviewed and updated – further reference to the EYFS curriculum and confirmation that we find suitable places to rehome the chickens/ducks.	27 Jan 2025 Committee Member (H Heaven)