



Gulval School 'Pets in School' Policy

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1. Mission Statement

Adventure Learning Academy Trust (ALAT) brings a new energy and approach to providing the best education for our pupils. Through proven practices, ALAT will transform the learning of pupils, raise standards and provide the highest quality learning environments, enabling pupils and teaching staff to thrive and be the best. ALAT's aim is to break down the barriers that limit educational progress. We do this through adopting a personal learning pathway for every child – one that takes account of individual needs, aspirations and talents.

ALAT's values:

Learn

Provide the best education for every pupil.

Ensure the highest quality teaching and learning.

Work with the family, parent or carer.

Grow

Grow our pupils' futures.

Develop the best teaching staff.

Provide the best learning environment and supporting technology.

Prosper

Lead the way in education.

Realise the opportunities.

Be connected to the community.

2. Introduction

Studies show that encouraging children to take an interest in animals can have a positive effect on them and can be used to improve human and animal welfare. Some of the benefits have been identified as follows:

School pets have been found to:

- motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- encourage a respect and reverence for life in pupils and thereby improve their relationships with other pupils, parents and teachers
- foster a sense of responsibility in children
- teach children to nurture and respect life
- lead to the development of hobbies /careers in animal care
- improve academic achievement

Pets in schools also have social benefits for the school community:

- enhance the learning environment, creating a sense of security and family warmth for the pupils



- encourage the involvement of parents and the wider community in school activity
- help to promote the school as an important nurturing influence in the community

3. Looking after a school pet

At Gulval School we aim to promote good practice in animal care. Children are taught correct procedures in handling and caring for animals; they are encouraged to take a shared responsibility for the care of the animals, under supervision. Children will be taught how to interact gently with our school pets whilst under adult supervision.

At Gulval we:

- obtain well socialised young animals from a reputable source
- abide by the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which places a duty on animal owners to ensure their animal's welfare needs are met. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has produced guidance on this act: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farm-animals-looking-after-their-welfare>
- ensure that each animal enjoys an optimum environment, in social groups. If appropriate. We are aware that keeping mixed gender animals can lead to breeding and result in welfare problems
- routine preventive health measures are practised as advised by the vet –vaccination, flea prevention and worm control where appropriate.
- pets and their quarters are kept clean and safe at all times.
- A high quality, appropriate diet is provided
- children always wash hands after handling
- any sick animals are promptly isolated and examined by a vet
- careful arrangements for holiday and weekend care are made

4. Handling Animals

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

When handling animals:

- do not consume food or drink
- cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings
- wash your hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals



- keep animals away from the face

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

Gloves will 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.

5. 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 cannot be discounted. 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.

Hand washing soon after handling animals will help.

Teachers should watch 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. In most cases, an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart; in extreme cases, seek medical advice.

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.

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.

Unless these are known to have originated from a reliable source, it will not be possible to be confident that they are disease free.

6. 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.

Holiday times, particularly in primary schools, can obviously create real difficulties. It is preferable that the animals remain at school and suitable arrangements made for their normal feeding, watering and cleaning. If, however, this is impossible and animals have to be taken out of school at holidays, they 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.
- 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).

Occasionally pets can be brought in as a special 'Show and Tell.' In this instance the Principal will need to approve the visit following the completion of a risk assessment by the class teacher. Any necessary precautions will need to be put in place by the class teacher and or owner of the pet to ensure the safety of the children and staff.



7. Appendix 1: Keeping animals in school: RSPCA guidance

Pages 4-6 of the RSPCA guidance linked to above cover the welfare needs of classroom pets. The guidance says that where animals are kept in schools, “any staff responsible for classroom pets must ensure that the needs of these animals are met”. This includes ensuring that:

- Accommodation is appropriate to the animal and its size
- Suitable fresh food and water is provided
- The animal has the freedom to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- The animal has suitable companionship
- The animal is protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease
- A named person is responsible for the welfare and husbandry of the animals at all times
- Any contact between children or young people and animals is supervised and controlled
- The animals are given adequate "rest" periods away from disturbance
- The animal's lifestyle (according to its species) fits with the academic day
- Any animals kept are prevented from indiscriminate breeding

8. Appendix 2: Keeping exotic pets: guidance

The RSPCA also has guidance on keeping exotic pets. It explains that before getting an exotic pet, you should consider:

- How long the animal will live and how large it will grow
- What it eats and how much
- What environment the animal needs. For example, does it need a carefully controlled environment?
- The size of the enclosure
- Whether the animal should be kept alone or with others
- Whether the animal is nocturnal
- Whether there is a vet specialising in exotic animals nearby who can treat the animal if it becomes sick
- Whether you need a licence or other legal paperwork to keep the animal

9. Appendix 3: Handling animals: guidance for schools

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has advice on animals in education. It says on page 4 that before letting pupils hold a pet, the school should check that:

- The animal is used to being handled
- The animal is not likely to be stressed by excitable children
- Whether there is a correct way to hold the animal, which has been taught to the pupils

It adds:

The handling of certain animals should be avoided altogether. Those which are nervous, nocturnal or prone to biting or scratching should be observed and not touched.

Children and adults should wash their hands soon after coming into contact with any animal or its equipment. The guidance explains that to reduce the risks of diseases being passed from pets to humans:

- Cuts and abrasions on hands and arms should be covered to minimise the risk of infection
- Cleaning routines and arrangements for the disposal of animal waste should be carried out with due regard for good hygiene standards
- Contaminated surfaces should be properly washed and disinfected





CMA House 2nd Floor Newham Road Truro TR1 2SU

T 01872 858 161 E enquiries@alat.org.uk

www.alat.org.uk