



Animals in the Setting

Introduction

Houghton and Wyton Pre-school recognises the value of animal experiences in supporting children's emotional development, empathy, and understanding of the world. We welcome opportunities for children to safely interact with animals as part of their learning, while ensuring robust risk assessment and hygiene practices are in place to minimise potential risks.

Aim

To ensure that the presence of animals in the setting is managed safely and responsibly, while enriching the curriculum and respecting the well-being of all involved.

Objectives

We will:

- Carefully plan and risk assess all animal interactions
- Ensure high standards of hygiene and supervision
- Follow health and safety guidance from relevant authorities
- Promote kindness and respect towards animals

Roles and Responsibilities

- Manager/Deputy: Approves and risk assesses all animals in the setting or external visits involving animals
- Staff Team: Ensures hygiene procedures and supervision are followed; supports children's understanding
- Parents/Carers: Informed of planned animal experiences in advance; may be asked to support visits or provide pets for short-term interaction

Procedures

1. Animals in the Setting

- A full risk assessment is completed for any pet living in the setting
- Animals must be kept in clean, safe enclosures and cared for appropriately
- Children are taught:
 - How to handle animals safely
 - When and how to wash hands after contact
 - Signs of distress or when to give the animal space
- Staff supervise all animal interaction
- The health of the animal is checked regularly and veterinary advice sought when needed
- Children's allergies and phobias are reviewed before introducing animals to the setting

2. Animals Visiting the Setting (e.g. mobile farm, guide dog, vet visit)

- Parents are informed in advance of any planned visit involving animals
- A risk assessment is completed, including:
 - Insurance and handling procedures of the visiting organisation
 - Staff supervision and emergency arrangements
 - Sanitising and handwashing stations before and after contact

3. Children Bringing Pets from Home

- Permission is sought from the Manager in advance
- A full risk assessment must be completed before the visit
- The animal must be in a secure container or held safely at all times
- Parents remain responsible for the animal throughout the visit



4. Farm Visits and Off-Site Animal Experiences

- Staff follow Public Health England (PHE) guidance on hand hygiene and avoiding infection
- Children wash hands after contact with animals, surfaces, or soil
- Disposable gloves are worn when necessary (e.g. cleaning boots, assisting toileting)
- No eating or drinking during or immediately after handling animals
- Soiled shoes/clothing are removed before re-entering the setting or home

5. Health and Hygiene

- Children and staff wash hands:
 - After contact with animals or their bedding/housing
 - Before eating and drinking
 - After contact with soil, faeces, or animal waste
- Hand sanitiser is not a substitute for handwashing when animals are involved
- Surfaces are cleaned and disinfected after animal visits

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Manager and Board of Trustees, or sooner if guidance or practice changes.

Legislation and Guidance

- Statutory Framework for the EYFS (2023)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002
- Public Health England: Farm Visits – Avoiding Infection (2013)

Related Policies

- Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety
- Educational Visits
- Infection Control
- Hygiene
- First Aid

Acknowledgment

All staff, volunteers, and families must read and understand this policy. By doing so, they agree to uphold safety and hygiene procedures when animals are present in the setting.