

Pirbright Village Primary School



Nurture Farm: Caring for Animals in a School Setting

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| Next Review Date | Autumn 2026 |
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Experience of caring for animals and interacting with animals and the outside environment provide unique opportunities for learning. At Pirbright Village Primary School we recognise our responsibility to provide a safe environment and positive learning experiences for all pupils and visitors to the Nurture Farm and a high standard of care and welfare to all animals involved. This policy sets out how this is achieved. It has been written with reference to the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and our existing school policies, including Safeguarding and Teaching & Learning.

Statement of Aims

The Pirbright Nurture Farm is an initiative of Pirbright Village Primary School and, as such, adheres to the existing policies of the school.

This initiative has the following objectives:

1. to provide pastoral and social emotional support for children with specific needs through structured programs of learning and animal-assisted intervention – both within our school community and from the wider community
2. to further enrich the school curriculum and learning opportunities.

We aim to demonstrate best practice in the care of animals, helping children develop increased respect, empathy and a sense of responsibility for living things by promoting a calm, confident, and sensitive manner when interacting with animals. We hope that many of the children who participate in sessions at the Nurture Farm will go on to enjoy a lifetime of caring for animals in a variety of ways.

Animal Welfare

Pirbright Village Primary School recognises our moral and statutory responsibility to ensure high standards of animal welfare at the Nurture Farm. We are committed to achieving and maintaining the highest possible standards of animal welfare, ensuring the good health, physical condition and mental well-being of the animals in our care.

We uphold the five freedoms concept promoted by the Farm Animal Welfare Council:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst

We ensure that our animals are fed a varied and appropriate diet that fulfils their nutritional needs and ensures optimum health and vitality. Fresh water is always available.

2. Freedom from discomfort

We ensure that high-quality accommodation is provided for safety, warmth and shelter from the elements. We adapt the accommodation according to the time of year. We maintain high standards of cleanliness and hygiene. We also carry out all routine grooming and well-being checks to ensure each animal is comfortable and happy.

3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease

We ensure that all the animals are closely monitored for their health. We are pre-emptive with annual vaccinations and regular treatments. We respond immediately to any health concerns or injuries. We check all enclosures on a daily basis to ensure they are safe and we have covered hen and duck runs should temporary confinement be required due to an outbreak of bird flu. We prioritise bio-security with handwashing and boot-dipping to limit the transfer of disease.

4. Freedom to express normal behaviour

We stock the animals according to their need for companionship and bonding with other animals of the same species and provide appropriate habitats for grazing, foraging, digging, running and playing. We ensure that each area is spacious, stimulating and safe with ample outdoor area and play equipment and opportunities to explore.

5. Freedom from fear and distress.

We prioritise the needs of our animals at all times and limit undue stress through monitored socialization, limiting visitors and groups to small numbers and ensuring that encounters are supervised by an adult familiar to the animals. We provide safe and secure housing for all our animals, and ensure they are kept safe overnight from predators. We have additional security in place for poultry, including mesh and slab flooring and electric rope. We have appropriate fencing, gates and security and monitor the whole environment for any toxic or poisonous plants.

We ensure that any necessary medical procedures are carried out by experienced veterinarians, whether they are routine treatments or common procedures for livestock and pets such as castration, disbudding, neutering. Any medication is provided following professional advice.

Acquiring and Caring for Animals

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and animals we take the following measures when acquiring animals for the Nurture Farm:

- We will ensure we have the capacity to accommodate the animal/s and seek professional advice to ensure we have the skills and resources to provide a suitable home and fully meet its welfare needs in the school environment.
- We carefully consider the impact the animal/s may have on neighbouring residents, or existing users of the school grounds.
- We ensure that our vets will be able to treat the animal/s if needed.
- We keep our school community updated via the Nurture Farm web page and Facebook page.
- We assign a budget for the care of the animal/s to ensure ongoing funding is available to provide a suitable level of care long-term.
- We ensure that animals come from a reputable source. If appropriate it will live at home with the member of staff responsible for its care, or access to it will be restricted, for a period of quarantine and/or socialisation.

Once the animal is resident at school, we will take the following measures:

- We provide housing of a suitable size with all necessary features and enrichments.
- We keep the housing and surrounding area clean and in good condition at all times.
- We provide a suitable single-sex social group for the animal/s if appropriate.
- We provide the correct quantity of suitable feed. All feed will be stored correctly.
- We carry out preventative health care measures as appropriate.
- We will monitor the behaviour and health of the animal on an ongoing basis and ensure that any sick or injured animals are isolated, treated, and seen by a vet if necessary.
- Any cleaning chemicals or animal medications will be stored securely.

Sessions with Pupils or Visitors

- Sessions with the animals will be organised by the Farm Manager / Lead Teacher and will need to fulfil at least one of the three key objectives detailed above.
- We have in place a comprehensive written risk assessment for activities associated with keeping and caring for the animal/s.
- Pupils and visitors will only handle animals under close supervision from the Farm Leader or designated adult who has liaised with the Farm manager to ensure suitability of animal to child and activity.
- The Farm Leader will adapt the activity if an animal shows signs of stress or the visitor is unable to safely handle the animal.
- Any visitor to the animals will need to dip their footwear and wash their hands thoroughly as they enter the farm and leave the farm. We implement strict hygiene and hand-washing procedures for all pupils coming into contact with the animal or

associated equipment. Between contact with different animals, the visitor will need to wash their hands.

- All visitors from outside the school will complete a pre-visit questionnaire to ensure that the Farm Leader is aware of their individual needs during the visit.

Visiting Animals

Visits from domestic, exotic and farm animals can enrich learning. We take the following measures to ensure any such visits are safe and humane:

- No animals are brought onto the school premises without prior planning and permission from the head teacher.
- In some cases we will refuse access for visiting animals if we feel there is potential for cross-contamination with our own animals.
- We produce a written risk assessment for all animal visits, taking into account the safety of any pupils with allergies, a compromised immune system, or behavioural issues.
- We carefully check the credentials of any potential providers, requesting risk assessments, suitable public liability insurance, welfare policies and references as appropriate.
- We require animal visit providers/ owners/ handlers to provide details of proposed contact between pupils and animals and assurance that all animals are vaccinated as needed.
- Any animals on site are the responsibility of their owner and must be safely and humanely restrained or contained when not being held by their owner/ handler.

Transporting Animals

This can be a stressful situation for animals so we do everything we can to ensure that we minimise stress.

- We only transport animals if necessary for health purposes, breeding, showing, or for educational purposes off-site.
- We ensure that all the necessary authorities have been notified and complete any movement notification documents.
- We ensure that travelling crates are appropriate in size, secure, ventilated and comfortable.
- We have plenty of water available at all times.
- We follow professional guidance and seek advice prior to travel to ensure that we are taking every measure possible to provide a safe, stress-free experience for the animal/s

Animals Off Site

There are occasions when we will take our animals off site by foot – for walks or for exercise. This will be as part of set programmes with specific children or groups.

- We will ensure that the animal remains under control at all times with use of a harness / collar and lead.
- Any animal being exercised off-site will be tagged or microchipped.
- There will always be a supervising adult.
- An agreed route will be formulated in advance and permission sought from the necessary authorities to ensure there is no access or cross contamination to local livestock.
- Only animals which are comfortable in these activities will be used. Those who show any signs of stress will not be included in these activities.
- These activities will be covered in an additional risk assessment document.