

# Animals in Wider Ambition Settings Policy



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## 1. Statement of intent

Wider Ambition recognises that handling and caring for animals can support our students in a variety of ways that support their well-being and attainment. Access to animals is available for our students throughout the school day so they can learn to use them as a strategy for anxiety reduction, and self-calming.

Wider Ambition recognises that it has a legal duty of care towards any animals present on the school site and the well-being of the animals in our care is prioritised at all times. Wider Ambition will make sufficient resources and staff time available to ensure that the animals have the good diet, pleasant, clean environment, and sufficient stimulation to ensure that they are happy, healthy, and safe to be handled and cared for by our students.

Whilst the likelihood of diseases being passed on to humans from animals at Wider Ambition is low, strict cleaning hygiene practices will be observed and the risks of transmission of micro-organisms reduced as far as is reasonably possible without reducing the positive impact of the activities.

## 2. About our policies

- 2.1 Our policies have been developed to comply with all relevant legislation and associated guidance. Policies will be updated periodically as necessary.

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- 2.2 Our policies are inter-related and are intended to be read, understood and used collectively.
- 2.3 All staff and governors are expected to be familiar with and abide by our policies.
- 2.4 The School Administrator is responsible for ensuring volunteers and visitors are familiar with any policies which are relevant to their involvement and for taking reasonable steps to ensure compliance.
- 2.5 By accepting and maintaining a placement at a Wider Ambition setting, parents agree to support the ethos and policies. Parents are able to access these documents via the website, or by emailing the School Administrator.
- 2.6 The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring policies are implemented fairly, effectively, and consistently in each setting.
- 2.7 The Headteacher is responsible for identifying any training needs in relation to our policies. The School Administrator is responsible for arranging the required training. All staff are expected to engage in continuous learning and ongoing training appropriate to their roles.
- 2.8 The effectiveness of our policies and their implementation is monitored by the Governing Body. Unless otherwise stated, the Governing Body reviews each policy annually.
- 2.9 The Governing Bodies for Wider Ambition settings are provided by Governing for Ambition, an independent community interest company. The Governing Body uses its expertise to monitor the performance of each setting and to advise the Proprietor of any recommended actions. Responsibilities assigned to the Governing Body are limited to these advisory and accountability functions.
- 2.10 Wider Ambition Ltd is a subsidiary of Wider Plan Ltd. References to the Proprietor mean a Director of Wider Ambition or a senior representative from Wider Plan with delegated authority.
- 2.11 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) includes the Proprietor, Head, Deputy Head, Pastoral Lead, Quality of Education and Professional Development Lead, and any member of staff to whom responsibility is temporarily delegated by the Headteacher or Proprietor.
- 2.12 All references to parents within our policies should be interpreted to include parent carers.

## 3. Animals at Wider Ambition

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- 3.1. Opportunities to care for and interact with animals are made available to students at Wider Ambition primarily for the purpose of facilitating anxiety management and supporting students' mental health. As such, students are permitted to interact with school animals at any time, unless it would be detrimental to the health or wellbeing of a student or an animal.
- 3.2. Where possible and reasonable, students will be supported to develop routines around the animals that help them to maintain low levels of stress or anxiety and support emotional well-being, as well as using them to reduce high levels of stress and anxiety when they occur.
- 3.3. All staff are aware of the benefits of interaction with animals for students and, where appropriate, incorporate the use of school animals in their planning of lessons and activities.

#### 4. Duty of care

- 4.1. Under the law, the welfare of an animal includes the following criteria:
  - 4.1.1. Its need for a suitable environment
  - 4.1.2. Its need for a suitable diet (food and fresh water)
  - 4.1.3. Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
  - 4.1.4. Its need to be housed with, or away from, any other animals
  - 4.1.5. Its need to be protected from pain, suffering and disease
- 4.2. Wider Ambition will ensure that protocols are in place to provide for all needs detailed in section 4.1.
- 4.3. The head teacher is responsible for:
  - 4.3.1. In cooperation with the designated member of staff responsible for the animal, recording a written risk assessment prior to the arrival of animals onsite.
  - 4.3.2. Ensuring that a rota is in place for looking after the animals before, during and after the school day, as well as during holidays and weekends.
  - 4.3.3. Ensuring that there are sufficient resources available for a high standard of care to be provided to all animals onsite.
  - 4.3.4. Ensuring that all staff support the use of animal interaction by students as a method of stress and anxiety mitigation when it is requested or may be needed.
  - 4.3.5. Ensuring that handling, caring for and interacting with animals is integrated into lesson plans wherever possible and appropriate throughout the Wider Ambition curriculum.

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- 4.3.6. Maintaining an overview of the animal care at Wider Ambition and taking action to address any concerns raised in a timely and effective manner that ensures the animals are consistently happy, healthy, safe and suitable for use with students.
- 4.4. The designated member of staff is responsible for:
  - 4.4.1. Establishing a written care programme for each animal present at Wider Ambition
  - 4.4.2. Provide guidance on maintaining the animal's wellbeing and requirements for supervision of students when handling the animal.
  - 4.4.3. Registering all animals with a suitable veterinary surgery and arranging and facilitating all health checks, parasite treatments and vaccinations.
  - 4.4.4. Ensuring that high quality nutrition, suitable to their age, health status and breed, is available for all animals at all times and that it is sourced from a reputable supplier.
  - 4.4.5. Ensuring that all animals have continuous access to a supply of clean, fresh drinking water.
  - 4.4.6. Inspecting animal housing every week to ensure that it is clean, secure and safe for the animal occupants and students or staff. Reporting any repairs or changes required to the facilities assistant so that the work can be arranged.
  - 4.4.7. Ensuring that there is a ready supply of suitable, healthy treats available for students to give to animals where appropriate.
  - 4.4.8. Creating a protocol for cleaning of animal cages and ensuring that the necessary cleaning products are available, COSHH risk assessments completed, appropriate PPE is available, all areas are left clean, dry, and safe and waste disposed of safely.
  - 4.4.9. Where animals are brought in for a short period – for example, a day visit – checking with their handler that they are healthy and are up to date with any appropriate vaccinations and parasite treatments and writing and circulating to all staff a clear protocol that ensures the wellbeing of the animal and the health and safety of students, for the duration of its visit.

### 5. Housing and environment

- 5.1. Each animal house will be designed, sited, and constructed to provide a suitable environment, including any special requirement for exercise or social contact for the species to be housed, and will incorporate facilities sufficient for the students to access the animals in a manner that promotes extended periods of handling that are safe and comfortable for all concerned.
- 5.2. A dry, vermin-proof container will be used to store each type of food, away from human food.

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- 5.3. Feeding troughs and bowls will be suitable for the animals using them and easy to clean.
- 5.4. All animals have access to a comfortable, solid-based lying area, with plenty of suitable bedding material. It must be replaced/replenished regularly to ensure that it remains dry
- 5.5. Where recommended, animals will be given company of their own kind and will never be isolated from the sight, sound, or smell of others.
- 5.6. Species that are incompatible, for example, predator and prey, or animals requiring different environmental conditions will not be housed in the same room or, where appropriate, within a distance where scent or sound can be detected.
- 5.7. Where school-based animals are taken home by students, suitable training will be provided to ensure that the animal is cared for appropriately, both from the perspective of student safety and animal welfare.

## 6. Animal handling

- 6.1. Opportunities to handle animals are made available to students throughout the day.
- 6.2. Animals may be handled by students where:
  - 6.2.1. The animal is not likely to be stressed by being handled.
  - 6.2.2. The animal can be handled in a location that is safe for the student and the animal.
  - 6.2.3. Where necessary, the student has been advised of the proper way to handle the animal or supported to do so.
  - 6.2.4. The student can reasonably be expected to behave in such a way that ensures their own safety and that of the animal.
  - 6.2.5. Where necessary, a member of staff is present to support the interaction.
- 6.3. When handling animals, staff and students will:
  - 6.3.1. Not consume food or drink.
  - 6.3.1. Cover any open cuts or abrasions on exposed skin with waterproof adhesive dressings.
  - 6.3.2. Wash their hands with soap and water after handling animals or their bedding.
- 6.4. Mammals will be handled daily to allow them to become accustomed to humans.

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- 6.5. Gloves will not be required, 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 do not particularly reduce dexterity, will be made available
- 6.6. Animals will be given adequate rest periods away from disturbances.
- 6.7. Any injuries sustained while handling or caring for animals will be managed in line with the Wider Ambition First Aid Policy and recorded in the Animal Incident Log (Appendix 1).

### **7. Breeding**

- 7.1 School animals will not be bred at Wider Ambition, in keeping with RSPCA opposition to such practice.
- 7.2 All projects that involve hatching, (e.g. butterfly kits or egg incubation) will be well researched and will not be undertaken if they required the young to be left in distress for long periods (e.g. overnight).

### **8. Infestation and disease**

- 8.2. All animals cared for at Wider Ambition will undergo regular health-checks and be vaccinated and treated for parasites as recommended by a veterinary surgeon.
- 8.3. Animals brought onto the sites for visits, will be healthy and update to date with any appropriate vaccinations and parasite treatments.
- 8.4. All members of staff are responsible for noting any indicators of ill health in the animals and reporting any concerns to the designated staff member, who will then contact the attending vet and inform the Headteacher.
- 8.5. Students with known allergies to specific animals have restricted access to those that may trigger a reaction . Where possible, animals will be bathed regularly to reduce the level of allergy-causing dander.
- 8.6. In any case of infestation or disease, appropriate treatment will be sought immediately, and, where recommended, students will be prevented from handling the animal(s) and they will be moved into a separate enclosure away from the others until they are back to full health.

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- 8.7. If the animals are found to have any disease which is contagious to humans, the Headteacher will inform parents immediately and the animal(s) will be isolated or removed from the premises as appropriate for treatment.

## **9. Bringing pets and other animals into Wider Ambition**

- 9.1. In addition to the general guidance given above, it is important that suitable arrangements are made in advance for the well-being of animals for the short time they are to be on the premises.
- 9.2. When a variety of animals will be together, consideration will be given to the possibility of unwanted interactions. Animals must be housed properly and separately whilst on the premises and any containers used to transport them must be safe, comfortable and retain the animal securely.

## **10. Injured animals brought in by students**

- 10.1. Students will be taught that attempts to retrieve 'abandoned' or injured wild animals in an attempt to save them may damage the animals concerned and spread infection, and that they should instead report the injury so that others can act appropriately.
- 10.2. Where a student brings a wild animal into school or finds one on the premises, the following procedure will be implemented:
- 10.2.1. Appropriate precautions, such as quarantining the animal, will be taken to minimise the risk of transmission of disease or parasites.
  - 10.2.2. Scrupulous standards of hygiene will be maintained.
  - 10.2.3. Expert advice will be sought from either a veterinary surgery or a wildlife rescue organisation.