

Policy Title	Animals on school sites
Prepared by	Trish Martin (Estates and H&S Director)
Approved date	May 2026
Review by	May 2027



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Related policies and documents

TEFAT Health and Safety Policy
TEFAT First Aid Policy
Academy Behaviour Policy

Definitions

- Where the word 'Trust' is used in this document it refers to The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- Where the word 'Governing Body' is used it refers to the Local Governing Body of an individual academy within the Trust.
- Where appropriate the Local Governing Bodies of individual academies will publish details of the procedures and practices to implement Trust policies.

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Legal context

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Equality Act 2010

Animal Welfare Act 2006

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Health protection in children and young people settings (Chapter 8: Pets and Animal Contact)

The most relevant part of this legislation for schools is;

Pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment. However, contact with animals can pose a risk of infection including gastro-intestinal infection, fungal infections and parasites. Some people, such as pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system, are at greater risk of developing a severe infection. However, sensible measures can be taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Head Teacher should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal. There should be a written agreement within the school detailing:

- *the types of animals allowed in the school,*
- *how to manage them and permitted behaviour whilst on the premises,*
- *where they can go and where they cannot go when in the school,*
- *any insurance liability of owners and handlers*

Animals should always be supervised when in contact with the children and those handling animals advised to wash their hands immediately afterwards. Animals should have recommended treatments and immunisations, be regularly groomed (including claws trimmed) and checked for signs of infection. Bedding should be laundered regularly.

Cat litter trays should be cleaned daily wearing disposable gloves. It should not be placed near food preparation, storage or eating areas. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves but pregnant staff members should not carry out this task because of the risk of toxoplasmosis.

Feeding areas should be kept clean and their food stored away from human food. Food not consumed in 20 minutes should be taken away or covered to prevent attracting pests

https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/30047/7/Chapter%208_%20pets%20and%20animal%20contact%20-%20GOV.UK.pdf

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Mission

The Elliot Foundation was created as a safe place for children and teachers where all are nurtured to achieve beyond even their own expectations. Our motto, "Where children believe they can because teachers know they can" reflects our conviction that raising expectations for all children and teachers is at the heart of a successful and inclusive society.

Vision

- **For children:** We help children to discover themselves and aspire beyond any limitations that their context might appear to place upon them. We help them understand that they can be, 'Heroes of their own lives' building the foundations for healthy and successful lives.
- **For schools:** In addition to the essential functional skills of reading, writing and mathematics, children need to learn how to learn and to believe that they can continue to do so. They must also possess the critical thinking skills to sift fact from fiction to be able to think for themselves, freely and creatively.
- **For success:** To thrive, whatever their chosen path, children need confidence, curiosity and commitment. We will nurture these attitudes across all their learning experiences
- **For communities:** Children at Elliot schools will be raised with an awareness of the world around them and their role in shaping a better future through volunteering and contributing in their communities.

Values



Put children first

We trust and value your professionalism.
We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children.
Our purpose is to improve the lives of children.



Be open to change

If you can see a better way, suggest it.
If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it.
We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children.



Be safe

Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children.
We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being.
Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff.
Don't assume that someone else will do it.



Forgive yourself and others

We all make mistakes.
Admit them, learn from them and move on.



Be kind and respect all

People are allowed to be different as are you.
Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish.
This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others.



Be the change you want to see

Making the world a better place starts with you.
Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others.



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1. Policy statement and objectives

- a. This policy sets out the procedures for hosting animals in school to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and visitors.
- b. Children and adults can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy through contact with a suitable, calm animal. Research indicates that school animals can improve reading skills, behaviour, attendance and self esteem. The primary objective is to provide a therapeutic intervention while maintaining a low risk of harm, through careful management.

2. Scope and principles

- a. This policy applies to all employees, pupils and visitors. It covers, predominantly, permanent “school animals” but also applies to visiting animals from within TEFAT or external organisations
- b. Participation / engagement with animals in school is voluntary; no pupil or staff member will be forced to interact with the animal against their wishes. Specific care will be taken to manage the needs of individuals with allergies or phobias.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Principal

- a. Determine the local policy in respect of animals on school sites - for school animals as well as parents/carers/visitors bringing dogs and other animals at drop off / collection, visiting animals and regular staff owned animals such as “school dogs”.
- b. For “school animals” attending with a staff member on a regular basis, the Principal must ensure that the purpose of the animal’s presence is clear and age appropriate. This also applies to determining ad hoc staff requests to bring their animal to school. In approving the introduction of a “school animal” there should be a clear rationale as to how it is intended to positively impact pupils.

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- c. Obtain written parental consent and details of any relevant allergies before any contact between pupils and the animal. For pupils with "severe" phobias or allergies, the school should create an Individual Risk Assessment.
- d. Ensure staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of the purpose of the school animal and ensure, where the nature of the animal is such that it is not contained in a cage etc eg a dog, there is a poster displayed in the school reception area notifying visitors of the presence of the animal.
- e. Carry out a school animal risk assessment, using the Trust template, and review termly and immediately following any incident involving the animal.
- f. Ensure the owner has adequate insurance cover in place should the animal "cause harm". Note: the Trust also maintains unlimited public liability insurance which includes cover where a school animal causes harm.
- g. Ensure that the animal has a named "responsible person" - there may be more than one nominated responsible person
- h. Oversee an investigation following any incident such as a bite, liaising with Trust Estates and H&S Director.
- i. Where parent/carer/visitor animals are permitted on the school site, carry out a risk assessment; this should include many of the considerations outlined in the school animal risk assessment.
- j. Train and instruct staff and pupils on a regular basis on safe and appropriate handling of school animals.

3.2 Responsible Person : smaller animals

- a. For small contained animals, e.g. hamsters, tortoises etc, the designated "Responsible Person" should ensure that the animal is fit, healthy and well cared for.

3.3 Responsible Person : Dogs

- a. This is likely to be the dog owner
- b. Ensure the animal is fit, healthy and up to date with vaccinations, treatments and 6 monthly health check up, as appropriate to the animal.
- c. The dog will be regularly groomed, including claw trimming, to maintain health and reduce allergens.
- d. Maintain full control and supervision of the dog at all times on school premises.
- e. The dog should only be at school if a designated owner / responsible person is also present.
- f. Keep the dog on a lead when moving between classrooms or in public areas (unless the school risk assessment determines differently).
- g. Understand the animal's body language to identify signs of stress or worry.
- h. Ensures sufficient dog walks / toilet breaks without interfering with work activities.

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3.4 Staff and pupils

- a. Follow the code of conduct and ensure pupils are supervised during all interactions with school animals
- b. Notify the Principal of any known allergies or fears regarding the animal.

3.5 The Trust

- a. Maintain appropriate Public Liability Insurance that explicitly covers the animal's presence in a school environment, notwithstanding 3.1f above, where the animal owner should hold appropriate public liability cover.
- b. Ensure that each school maintains a school-specific policy in relation to animals on site, with appropriate risk assessments. The Trust will carry out audits of animals on school premises as part of its routine Health and Safety compliance monitoring.

4. Health, safety and infection prevention

- a. To reduce the risk of infection, the school will implement the following measures:
- b. **Hand hygiene** : all persons must wash their hands or use sanitiser immediately after handling the animal or its equipment.
- c. **Waste disposal** : animal excrement must be cleared up immediately by an adult, double bagged and disposed of in an agreed refuse bin. Children must never perform this task.
- d. **Bite procedure** : should a bite occur, parents will be informed, first aid administered and the suitability of the animal reassessed by the Principal, in consultation with the Trust Estates and H&S Director.

5. Dog welfare and management

- a. **Quiet area** : The dog must have access to a dedicated, child-free quiet area for resting, such as a gated office, with signage explicitly stating that the space should not be accessed.
- b. **Physical needs** : the dog must have constant access to fresh water and be walked regularly throughout the day.
- c. **Environment** : The dog will not be allowed in school if it is unwell.

6. Pupil conduct

- a. Pupils must adhere to the following code of conduct to ensure safety

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- **Remain calm and gentle** at all times with the animal
- Follow the “**approach, ask, pet, goodbye**” protocol (as per Risk Assessment)
- **Don’t put faces near the animal’s face**
- **Do not disturb** the animal while it is eating, sleeping or resting
- Only touch the animal when invited by the responsible person
- Deliberate violence or threats toward the animal will be handled under the school’s Behaviour Policy

7. Assistance Dogs

- Under the Equality Act 2010, allowing an assistance dog onto the school site is considered a reasonable adjustment.
- Unlike school dogs, assistance dogs generally have a legal right to accompany their owner into all areas of the school, including dining halls, provided they are under control.
- Staff and pupils should be instructed on the role of an assistance dog and how their role may differ from that of a school animal

8. Legal Compliance & Dangerous Dogs Act

- No breeds listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act are permitted on school sites under any circumstances.
- For parents bringing dogs to drop-off, the school policy should state that any dog identified as a restricted breed must not be permitted on the site entirely to minimize risk.

9. Monitoring and review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the Operations team, or sooner if a significant change occurs.