

# Mason Moor Primary School



## School Rabbit Policy

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Approved by: Governing Body Approval date:

Last review date: Contact: [info@masonmoorprimary.co.uk](mailto:info@masonmoorprimary.co.uk)

Next review date: Approvers signature:

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## **Small Animals Policy**

### **Introduction**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having school animals, we want to encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident at reading to have a friendly audience and look forward to reading as a treat. The animals will be well cared for and responsibly owned by Ms A Kennett (Senior Assistant Headteacher and SENCO.).

### **Is there a risk in bringing a small animal into a school environment?**

This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with an animal and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

The Chair of Governors and The Executive Head Teacher have agreed that the school can have an animal and parents have been informed by letter and during show round visits with potential new parents that the school will have animals.

### **Reasons to have an animal**

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of animals in schools. Animals have been working in schools for over 10 years across the UK with several integrated very successfully in Southampton special schools. Dogs have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for many years.

Evidence indicates that benefits for children include:

- Cognitive – companionship with an animal stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing. Reading to an animal can be very beneficial as dogs give unconditional acceptance and are non-judgemental.
- Social – an animal provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing, and focused interaction with others. Attendance for some pupils has improved because of a school animal.
- Emotional – a school animal improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. They can also teach empathy, compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. This has been known to reduce the percentage of violent or aggressive behaviour in school.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.
- Environmental – an animal in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

### **Context**

- The rabbits will be cared for by Amy Kennett.
- Veterinary costs will be covered by the owner.
- They rabbits have been introduced to children at a young age, therefore, they will be used to this interaction.
- The risk assessment (attached) will be reviewed annually,
- Visitors and new pupils will be informed of the animals on arrival.

### **Day to day Management**

The rabbits will:

- Not be allowed in nursery if unwell,
- Remain in their hutch throughout the day,
- Be always under the full control and supervision of an adult,
- Have had all injections and these will be maintained annually,
- Be wormed / flea-ed as per veterinary advice.

### **School Pupils will:**

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with the rabbits,
- Meet the rabbits in small groups with an adult,
- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the rabbits every time they meet them,
- Always remain calm,
- Be gentle,
- Be told not to “put your face near the rabbit’s face”,
- Be told not to “disturb a rabbit that is eating or sleeping”,
- Not feed the rabbit,
- Never tease the rabbit,
- Do not pull their ears or fur.

**Health and Safety Principles**

- Children will always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the rabbits.
- Any rabbit foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of the dog at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this.

**Concerns**

Some children may have had upsetting experiences and thus have a fear of animals. The animals will be calm and gentle around children; they have a very loving and gentle nature. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them.

It is understandable that some parents may be concerned about possible allergic reactions to a rabbit. The dogs will be subjected to a thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. We will ask parents who are concerned to make the school aware if their child has an allergy.

Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the rabbits is invited to write to Ms Kennett to inform her of their wishes.

**Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually by Ms Kennett.  
The impact of having rabbits in school will be monitored by the SLT.

**Document Control**

**Revision History**

Version	Revision Date	Revised By	Revision
1.0	February 2024	Amy Kennett	Policy written as a draft

**Signed by**

	Name	Signature	Date
Executive Head	Mr Constable-Phelps		
Chair of Governors	Lisa Benham (MM)		

**Distribution**

Version	Shared with	Date
1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff via school drive</li> <li>● Parents via Website</li> <li>● Governors via school drive</li> </ul>	

**Review**

**Date for next  
review**

February 2025

Risk benefit assessment and management record					
<b>Establishment:</b>	Mason Moor Primary School				<b>Location/Purpose: Rabbits</b>
<b>Benefits (aims, objectives, intended outcomes...)</b> <b>Please see introduction section of School Animals Policy.</b>					

Identifying the hazards – assessing the risk		Control measures – reducing the risk	
<b>Rabbit's nails</b> Child being scratched by a rabbit.	<b>risk rating</b> med	The rabbit will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises. Children are not left with the rabbit unsupervised, and children will be reminded that they are not to run around the rabbit. Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to whole school during assemblies, class time and PSHE lessons. Risks of scratching will reduce, and the risk assessment will be reviewed. The rabbits will only be held by adults and children will only stroke.	<b>risk outcome</b> Low  Low  Low  Low Low
<b>The rabbit gets loose from their hutch</b>	Med med med	Rabbits are to remain in their hutch unless an adult is around. Rabbits will only be allowed in their fenced area. Small gaps will be filled.	Low  Low  Low
<b>Rabbit hair causing allergies.</b> Children have allergic reaction.	med	Parents complete allergy forms when joining the school. Children will have the opportunity to interact with the rabbits and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction. Children have been taught to wash their hands/using hand gel after active participation with the rabbits.	Low Low Low
<b>Children getting germs from the rabbits.</b> Children/staff will contract diseases that can be carried by rabbits.	low	Rabbits to remain in their hutch. Children to only stroke the fur of the rabbits. All cleaning to be completed by adults only. Children to always wash hands after handling the rabbits.	Low Low Low Low

<p><b>Financial cost of the rabbit's upkeep</b> School unable to afford ongoing cost of the day-to-day upkeep.</p>	<p>low</p>	<p>The dogs are the responsibility of Mrs Ashbolt-Smith, and she is financially responsible for all of their care and day-to-day costs. The dogs are the responsibility of Mrs Ashbolt-Smith outside of school hours.</p>	<p>Low  Low</p>
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<p><b>Completed:</b></p>	<p>Date: 1.3.24</p>		
<p><b>Signed:</b></p>	<p>Senior Leader: Amy Kennett</p>	<p>Head of establishment:</p>	