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Cornerstone Academy Trust

School Pets and Animals Policy

CORNERSTONE ACADEMY TRUST

SCHOOL PETS AND ANIMALS POLICY

This policy and other documents relating to this policy are available in other formats on request.

1. Scope of this policy

- 1.1. This policy sets out the Trust's policy for the allowing and handling of school pets and other animals. This policy applies to any school pet or animal and does not affect the school's right to prohibit other pets or animals on school property.
- 1.2. This policy may be used by anyone who would like to understand more about the Trust's stance on pets and animals in school. This includes parents and carers of pupils, neighbours of any of the schools or any other members of the local communities.
- 1.3. This policy does not apply to pets or animals not on school grounds or visits to venues where pets or other types of animals are present. These are dealt with under separate policies such as the outdoor education, trips and residential policy.
- 1.4. Alongside this policy, there is a school pets and animals risk assessment which outlines the typical risks associated with the current pets and animals within the Trust's schools and how the Trust would expect to mitigate those risks.

2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1. The Trust strives to provide an outstanding education for all our pupils. There is a belief that children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a pet or other animals. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with them. We value the development of children's well-being along with their spiritual, moral, and social education as highly as we value academia. We believe school pets and animals are a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills, and well-being.

Whilst there are potential risks in bringing pets or other animals into a school environment, the Trust seeks to mitigate those risks as far as it can and recognises that the broad range of benefits that pets and other animals can provide to the education of children can be very advantageous.

3. School Pets and animals

- 3.1. The pets in school currently include:

- Pygmy goats (both at BCPS and WCPS)
- School dog (at BCPS, WCPS and MCPS)

- 3.2. The Trust reserves the right to introduce further school pets of its choosing and at any of its schools. Where new pets are introduced, parents will be notified as applicable.

- 3.3 All pets will be fully insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be kept up to date. If a pet is ill, it will either not be allowed into school or isolated away from the presence of children and visitors.
- 3.4 Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the pets and animals. Children will be encouraged to remain calm, not make sudden movements and not stare into an animal's eyes as this could be threatening.
- 3.5. Pupils will be discouraged from putting their faces near an animal, to always approach them standing up and not to go near or disturb an animal if it is sleeping or eating. Pupils will be encouraged to learn how to interact with an animal in a positive way and not be allowed to play too roughly with an animal. The adult in charge of an animal must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- 3.6 The school dog will always be under the supervision of a responsible adult and will never be left solely in the care of children. The school dog will be kept on a lead when moving around the school, and when in classes of younger children where they are unable to communicate their consent of being approached by the dog.
- 3.7 Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to animals should not go near them. Anyone with a fear of animals will be respected and never be forced to interact with them. They can receive coaching in a controlled environment with the animal to help them overcome their fears if they so wish. The animal's health and well-being are prioritised along with that of the children and staff.
- 3.8 Parents/carers have the right to withhold consent for their child to have any direct contact with a school pet or animal. Any such wishes will be respected and upheld by the school. They should notify the Head of School by email as soon as possible on receiving notification that a school pet or animal is being introduced.
- 3.9 There are various benefits which have been identified by having school pets or animals in school and these are shown in appendix 1 below.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Board of Trustees has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy and risk assessment for school pets and animals. The CEO & Executive Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The CEO & Executive Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to others. All Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice, and guidance as and when required.

5. Health and Safety

- 5.1 Any foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult. If any 'accidents' occur in areas where children have access, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.
- 5.2 The pets or other animals will not be allowed to enter the school kitchen or go into the hall during mealtimes and pupils should always wash their hands after handling any pets or animals.

5.3 Should a bite occur (even playfully):

- a. Parents will be contacted immediately;
- b. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing;
- c. The child/adult will be released for medical attention;
- d. A full investigation will take place; and
- e. The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the Headteacher.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 The following will be monitored and considered in the keeping of school pets and animals:

- The school will consider the needs of the pet or animal first;
- Research will be done to ensure the choice of pet including gender, breed and how many (some pets need to live in pairs) would be most suited to our schools;
- Develop a code of conduct with the children and make parents aware of the pet too;
- Ensure there are care sheets and charts in place to properly manage the welfare of the pet as applicable;
- Ensure the appropriate safety precautions are in place for hand washing etc;
- Ensure all handling is fully supervised by an adult;
- Look at way pets and animals can be incorporated into the children's learning and ideas for curriculum links;
- Seek to carry out educational talks to teach more about pet care and welfare; and
- Plan and mitigate for the death of a pet or a pet leaving the school due to unforeseen circumstances.

6.2 The Executive Headteacher and the Trustees are responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed on a two-yearly basis.

Appendix 1

The benefits of school pets and other animals

There are various benefits which have been identified in enabling school pets and other animals onto the school premises which include:

- A school pet enables children to put our school values into practice: from friendship to patience, respect, love, and happiness; each one of our values can be developed through and alongside an animal.
- Children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school pet.
- Children and adults are bound to come in to contact with animals at various points in their lives. Children without pets have the opportunity to learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with them when they are out and about.
- With a pet to care for, children are more mindful of their behaviour. Incidents of running in corridors and shouting unnecessarily are reduced; they are generally more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices.
- To help children to develop a growth mindset: to be resilient learners who aren't afraid to make mistakes and persevere to acquire new skills. A pet is an excellent role model for this as interacting takes time and repetition.
- Reading programmes with some pets, particularly dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, pupils find social support and peer interaction.
- As a focus or context for learning, the school pet can provide an excellent resource and tangible motivation for children in all subject areas.

- Animals provide confidence to children as they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Animals can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who are feeling vulnerable, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of animals.

A pet will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a pet.

- Animals in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching social skills and responsibility. Researchers report that pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the animal, can better understand how classmates may feel. Specifically, some schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Schools can use animals to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils.

- With a pet in the school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of school pets is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a pet at school.