

Animal Health and Safety Policy

At The Orchard Day Nursery Kingston, we recognise that positive experiences with animals can make a valuable contribution to children's learning, wellbeing and development. Opportunities to observe, care for and interact appropriately with animals help children develop empathy, compassion, respect for living things, responsibility and an understanding of the natural world.

Animal experiences also support many areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), including communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, understanding the world and physical development.

Whilst these experiences offer many benefits, we recognise that animals can also present risks, including allergies, bites, scratches, infections and emotional distress. We therefore carefully assess and manage all activities involving animals to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both children and animals.

This policy should be read alongside our:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Infection Prevention and Control Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Outdoor Learning Policy
- First Aid Policy.

Legislative Framework

This policy reflects guidance contained within:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance on preventing infection associated with animals.

Our Approach

We believe children benefit from meaningful experiences with animals when these are carefully planned and supervised.

We will always ensure that:

- Children's health, safety and wellbeing remain the highest priority
- The welfare of animals is respected at all times
- Interactions are appropriate for children's age and stage of development
- Participation is never forced
- Individual needs, allergies, medical conditions and cultural beliefs are respected
- Thorough risk assessments are completed before any animal interaction takes place.

Children will be taught to understand that animals are living creatures with their own needs and feelings. Practitioners will model kindness, gentle handling and respect, helping children understand that animals should never be frightened, chased, hurt or handled roughly.

Nursery Pets

Where the nursery keeps resident animals, careful consideration will be given before introducing any animal into the setting.

The Nursery Manager will ensure that:

- The chosen species is suitable for an early years environment
- Appropriate research has been undertaken regarding the animal's welfare needs
- Accommodation meets recognised welfare standards
- The animal has access to quiet areas away from children
- Suitable arrangements are in place for weekends, holidays and emergencies
- The animal is registered with a veterinary practice where appropriate
- Vaccinations, parasite control and health checks are maintained where applicable.

Children will always be supervised when interacting with nursery animals.

Participation in caring for animals will always be voluntary and appropriate to children's developmental stage.

Animal Welfare

We have a responsibility to safeguard not only children but also the animals in our care.

Animals will:

- Be handled respectfully
- Never be forced to interact with children
- Have opportunities to rest away from children
- Receive appropriate food, water and enrichment
- Receive prompt veterinary treatment if unwell
- Be cared for by competent adults.

If an animal shows signs of stress, illness or distress, interactions with children will cease immediately.

Hygiene and Infection Prevention

Animals can naturally carry germs that may cause illness.

To minimise risks:

Children and staff will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and running water immediately after touching animals, their housing, bedding, food bowls or equipment.

Alcohol hand gel will not replace handwashing after animal contact.

Animals will never enter food preparation areas, kitchens or places where food is stored or prepared.

Food and drink will not be consumed whilst handling animals.

Children will be discouraged from kissing animals, placing their faces close to animals or allowing animals to lick their faces or hands.

Comforters, dummies and bottles will be kept away from animals.

Only authorised staff will clean cages, tanks, hutches or enclosures using appropriate protective equipment.

Waste will be disposed of safely in accordance with infection control procedures.

Allergies and Individual Needs

Before introducing animals into nursery or arranging animal visits, we will consider:

- Known allergies
- Asthma
- Eczema
- Immune-compromising medical conditions
- Phobias
- Cultural or religious beliefs
- Individual healthcare plans.

Risk assessments will be updated where necessary, and reasonable adjustments made to enable children to participate safely wherever possible.

Parents will be informed in advance of planned animal visits where appropriate.

Animals Visiting the Nursery

Where animals visit the nursery, we will ensure:

- Visits have a clear educational purpose
- Providers are reputable and experienced
- Animals are suitable for young children
- Welfare standards are maintained
- A specific risk assessment is completed beforehand
- Appropriate insurance arrangements are in place where necessary.

Children will remain supervised throughout the visit.

Educational Visits to Farms and Animal Centres

Visits to farms and animal centres provide valuable opportunities for children to learn about the natural world.

Before arranging any visit, the Nursery Manager will ensure that:

- The venue has appropriate health and safety procedures
- Handwashing facilities are readily available
- Suitable toilet facilities are provided
- Eating areas are separated from animals
- Emergency procedures are understood
- Staffing ratios and supervision arrangements meet children's individual needs

- Transport arrangements are safe and appropriate.

A written risk assessment will be completed and shared with relevant staff.

During Farm Visits

Practitioners will ensure children:

- Are supervised at all times
- Treat animals calmly and respectfully
- Do not feed animals unless instructed
- Do not kiss or place their faces close to animals
- Avoid touching manure, slurry or animal waste
- Avoid placing hands, fingers or objects into their mouths
- Wash their hands thoroughly after every animal interaction and before eating or drinking.

Children will only consume food in designated eating areas away from animals.

Unpasteurised milk or dairy products will not be consumed.

Staff will check children's clothing and footwear before returning to nursery to minimise contamination.

Accidents and Emergencies

Any bite, scratch, allergic reaction or illness associated with animal contact will be managed in accordance with the nursery's First Aid and Managing Medical Conditions policies.

Parents will be informed promptly.

Where appropriate, medical advice will be sought, and incidents recorded and reviewed. Risk assessments will be updated following any incident to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently. Animal welfare arrangements, risk assessments and hygiene procedures will be reviewed regularly.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner following changes to legislation, national guidance or nursery practice.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>6th August 2026</i>	F.Joyce	<i>December 2026</i>