

Use of Animals in Schools Policy

Background

At Huntingdale Primary School we understand that it is appropriate at times to use animals to teach and enhance the school curriculum and provide a real life context to learning. Examples of this include having a class pet such as fish, using snails or worms when undertaking a unit on mini-beasts, students bringing in a new pet for show and tell or using an external provider to showcase reptiles as part of science. In enabling animals on school premises we need to ensure the safety and welfare of the animals as well as our students.

Purpose

To ensure:

- Animals are used appropriately and safely at Huntingdale Primary School and are cared for properly.
- The safety and welfare of staff and students.
- Huntingdale Primary School's practices are compliant with Department of Education and Training (DET) and Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee (VSAEC) policies and procedures.
- Adheres to the DET Values of accountability, leadership, respect, impartiality, integrity, human rights and responsiveness when implementing the international students program.

Implementation

- The Principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy, but may delegate certain roles to suitably qualified staff.
- The school should consider if they can replace, reduce or refine their use of animals in teaching and understand the ethical and welfare issues involved.
- As per DET policy, if schools wish to use animals for teaching purposes, approval is required from VSAEC before undertaking the activity. This also includes standard husbandry procedures and normal farming practices if the animals are being used for teaching purposes.
- To apply for approval from VSAEC, schools can submit a request through the Approval and Reporting System at least 2 weeks before the VSAEC meets. This can be found at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/animals.aspx>
- If animals are used as pets for environmental and personal enrichment, approval from VSAEC is not required.
- If teacher's are to use pets as part of the curriculum they need to ensure that they:
 - Inform parents ahead of time, at least a week prior (this could be via Flex Buzz).
 - Check that students do not have allergies or fears related to the animal.
 - Do not force children to touch or care for them if they feel uncomfortable.
 - Check the animal is not aggressive or poses a risk to the health and safety of staff and students.



- If teacher's use pets in the school the primary concern must be the welfare of the animal at all times. They need to ensure the pet is:
 - Adequately fed and given water.
 - Is housed safely, securely and humanely e.g. fish in a large tank, insects in ventilated container.
 - Cared for during weekends and holiday periods.
 - Given veterinary care when needed.

- If the school uses the service of an external provider that uses animals, for example an incursion the school should ensure:
 - They are a properly registered company and care for the animals appropriately.
 - Written parental approval is given at least two weeks before the event.
 - Students are adequately supervised with the animals during the event.
 - Those students who have fears or allergies to the animals are not forced to participate.

- If parents wish their child to share a new pet to the class they must:
 - Ensure the animal is toilet trained, is placid and not aggressive, is suitably transported to and from the school and is able to be around a class of students for a short amount of time.
 - Inform the teacher at least a week prior so that they can assess the suitability, health concerns or fears of students and arrange a time that is suitable. Visits should be no longer than 10 minutes.
 - Arrange a time that is suitable for the class teacher that minimises disruption to class programs.
 - Stay for the duration of the visit and take the pet home immediately after.

- All students should wash their hands after any contact with animals.

Note: If a student brings a sick, injured and orphaned animal to the school, a veterinary practitioner or the RSPCA should be contacted to handle the matter.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's 3 year cycle or as needed to comply with DET policy changes.

Document Status

Reviewed	School Council Ratification	Next Review
May 2016	19 th July 2016	19 th July 2019
6 May 2019- review by Principal		August 2022