

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.



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office

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 this policy.

Implementation

- The principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy but may delegate certain roles to suitably qualified staff.
- When planning to use animals for teaching, the school must consider the ethical and welfare issues involved.
- For live animal use in teaching to be justified, evidence must demonstrate that the project has scientific or educational merit.
- In addition, schools must follow the guiding principles for the humane use of animals in scientific research, known as the 3Rs:
 - **Replacement:** Where possible animals should be replaced by models, digital learning or other suitable methods.
 - **Reduction:** Use no more than the minimum number of animals. However, this should not be at the expense of greater suffering of individual animals.
 - **Refinement:** Activities must minimise handling, discomfort, distress or pain in animals.
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- As per DET policy, some projects or activities using animals may require approval from the Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee (VSAEC). Refer to: [When is VSAEC approval required](#).
- The school can obtain permits from the Office of the Conservation Regulator within the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning website to keep some wildlife species under certain circumstances.
- The school does not require VSAEC approval for some uses of animals in schools, such as classroom pets and therapy pets. In these circumstances, the care and welfare of the animal is of paramount importance. This includes care during weekend and holidays periods, and veterinary care when needed.
- If teachers 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 See Saw or Operoo).
 - 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.
 - Adequately feed and give water to the animals
 - Is housed safely, securely and humanely
- 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.
 - 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.

Evaluation

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

Document Status

Policy last reviewed	19 th July 2019
Consultation	2019- 6 May Principal 2022- 18 August- Principal, 4 October Education & Future Directions
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	August 2025