

Animal Welfare (incl. Dogs in school)

Introduction

In any class activity involving animals, the care and welfare of the animals must be paramount in relation to the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

Purposes

- To encourage through example, the proper care of living things within the school situation
- To provide experiences for students to observe, handle and care for animals in a humane way.
- To maintain a safe and healthy school environment for students and staff, communications with parents will be conducted and consideration of any risk will be proactively managed.
- To ensure that the care and welfare of animals is paramount in an activity involving the keeping of an animal or its study on a field trip.
- To educate students through education, example and discussion on the importance of animal care, welfare and the responsibilities involved.
- Animals are to be kept in appropriate surroundings with appropriate care.

Guidelines

- Every living creature must be treated with care and kindness.
- If the appropriate care cannot be provided, the animal is not to be kept in school.
- Animals kept in the classrooms as pets must be housed and fed properly. Frequent cleaning of enclosures should occur. Personal hygiene of the children and adults should be adhered to.
- Creatures kept in the classroom for topic observation must be housed and fed properly, and returned to their natural habitat on completion of the study.
- Stray animals found on school grounds are to be dealt with by staff only.
- Responsibility for the welfare of the animals rest with the staff member involved.
- Proper supervision must be put in place for the care of animals during weekends and school holidays.

Conclusion

At PBS we treat animals with care and kindness and this document reinforces that their welfare is paramount.

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Appendix A.

Dogs in School

At Paraparaumu Beach School we have seen benefits from allowing dogs and puppies in classrooms. The dogs that we permit on site are those owned by or fostered by school staff. Whilst we recognise that the presence of animals in our school can provide a valuable learning experience, we are cognisant that animals cannot be allowed to affect health and safety or disrupt learning. The procedures and guidelines below ensure that PBS is proactive in considering the risks and putting steps in place to ensure a positive experience for everyone.

We have witnessed educational, behavioural and emotional benefits to having dogs and puppies in the school environment. Students can increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with such pets. Research shows that animals in school can help with emotional regulation, encourage positive peer and social interactions, and act as non-judgemental participants in learning. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interacting with dogs and puppies.

At PBS we take the risks seriously and we are proactive in our approach. Our planning ensures risks are managed, minimised and/or eliminated. From the experience of other schools, as well as our own track record, we are aware that injuries or incidents caused by dogs are few. Therefore, if your child's teacher seeks permission to bring a dog or puppy into the class, they will ensure the class is educated and aware of our guidelines.

The staff member bringing a dog or puppies into school is responsible for:

- Seeking the principal's permission to bring their dog/puppy onto the school site during the school year. *NB: Aggressive dogs, or those with a history of aggression, will not be permitted at any time.*
- Notifying parents in writing of the intention to bring a dog/puppy into the classroom during the school year and checking whether parents have concerns or whether students have allergies/fears.
- Considering students with additional needs when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the classroom *e.g. allergies, haemophilia, anxiety, autism*. Where there are issues, the teacher and Principal will discuss the matter with the relevant parents/students to see if solutions can be found.
- Educating students appropriately. *See guidelines in the next section.*
- Providing supervision and keeping the dog/puppy under control. Dogs in the playground must be on a lead. Puppies may not need a lead depending on their size - but must be supervised by an adult or senior students. During class time dogs and puppies can be included in the daily routine but should not cause disruption to learning.

- Ensuring physical contact between the animal and students is based on mutual agreement between the owner and the student. Students will be reminded about handwashing after interacting with a dog or puppy.
- Ensuring separation from dogs at times when students are eating their morning tea and lunch.
- Ensuring first aid is immediately administered to students for any scratches or bites. Parents will be contacted, by the owner/foster carer, if an injury is more than superficial. Depending on the nature of the injury the Principal or parent may request an incident report. The permission for that particular dog/puppy to remain attending school will be reviewed as a result. The owner or foster carer is responsible if students or others in the school environment are injured.
- Maintaining clean classrooms/school grounds. Owners and foster carers are responsible for immediately cleaning any areas soiled by dogs e.g. classroom flooring, fenced off areas, dog crates, the school environment. *NB: Animals that are ill must be kept at home.*
- Maintaining flea and worming treatments.
- Replacing or repairing any items damaged by the animal

Guidelines for Educating Students

- The owner or foster carer is responsible for educating students and setting rules around the animal/s in their class.
- Prior to the introduction of a dog or puppy/puppies, students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs.
 - Students are likely to become excited and it is important that they react calmly, carefully without crowding the animal.
 - Students should not make sudden movements or stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
 - Students will be told not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
 - Students will be told not to disturb a dog that is eating, and not to feed a dog/puppy unless asked to do so.
 - Students will be told not to disturb a dog that is sleeping.
 - Students will not be allowed to play too roughly with a dog or puppy.
 - Students will be informed that many dogs do not like their head being patted. They should instead pat their chest or side.
 - Students will be taught about reading a dog's body language e.g *growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. Dogs displaying any of these warning signs should be immediately removed from the environment. Signs of the dog feeling uncomfortable such as the dog freezing and staring or making whale eye (when you can see the whole white of the dog's eye). Whining may also indicate a need for toileting.*