



## **Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Safety and Suitability of Premises, Environment and Equipment**

Providers must keep premises and equipment clean, and be aware of, and comply with, requirements of health and safety legislation (including hygiene requirements).

### **8.6 Animals in the Setting**

#### **Policy statement**

Children learn about the natural world, including animals, plants and other living things, as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) educational programmes, particularly **Understanding the World**.

Impact Montessori Nursery recognises that carefully managed contact with animals can provide valuable learning experiences and opportunities for children to develop respect and understanding for living things. We also recognise that animals can present risks, including bites, scratches, allergies, zoonotic infections and other health and safety hazards.

We will therefore ensure that any animals kept at, or brought into, the setting, and any visits involving animals, are appropriately planned and risk assessed. We will take reasonable steps to protect children, staff, volunteers, visitors and the animals themselves, while meeting the animals' welfare needs.

This policy should be read alongside the setting's **Health and Safety, Risk Assessment, Infection Control, Outings, First Aid, Allergies and Food Hygiene** policies.

#### **Procedures**

##### **Animals kept at the setting as pets**

- Before introducing an animal into the setting, we will consider the views and needs of children and parents/carers, including known allergies, phobias, cultural considerations and any medical or additional needs.
- We will consider whether the proposed animal is suitable for a nursery environment and whether its welfare needs can be met appropriately.
- Animals kept in the setting will be **mature and toilet trained where appropriate**. Reptiles will not be kept as pets because of the increased risk of Salmonella infection.
- A suitable risk assessment will be completed before an animal is introduced. The assessment will consider, as appropriate, allergies, bites, scratches, infection and zoonotic disease, animal behaviour, escape, children's ages and developmental needs, supervision, hygiene, cleaning, feeding, animal waste and emergency arrangements.
- A knowledgeable and named member of staff will have responsibility for the animal's day-to-day welfare and for ensuring that the agreed controls are followed.
- Staff responsible for animals will be familiar with the animal's welfare, dietary, housing and exercise needs and will ensure that these needs are met.

- Animals will have suitable, secure housing and access to appropriate food and clean drinking water.
- Animal housing, feeding equipment and other equipment will be cleaned and maintained regularly and kept away from areas where children eat or food is prepared.
- Animal food will be stored safely and separately from food intended for human consumption.
- Any food not consumed within a reasonable period will be removed or covered, as appropriate.
- Animals will be appropriately groomed and checked regularly for signs of illness, infection, injury or abnormal behaviour.
- Vaccinations, parasite control and other recommended veterinary treatments will be kept up to date, where applicable, and records retained.
- The setting will use a registered veterinary practice where appropriate and will maintain suitable arrangements for veterinary care and emergency treatment.
- Appropriate insurance arrangements will be maintained where animals are kept at the setting.
- Arrangements will be made for the animal's care during weekends, holidays and any periods when the nursery is closed.
- Children will be taught how to behave safely and respectfully around animals, including how and when they may touch or handle them.
- Children will **always be supervised** when they have contact with animals.
- Children will not be permitted to kiss animals, put their hands in their mouths after touching animals, or eat or drink while handling animals.
- Children and adults will wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and running water immediately after handling animals or touching their bedding, feeding equipment or other items that may be contaminated.
- Hand sanitiser will not be used as a substitute for handwashing after contact with animals.
- Children will not have contact with animal faeces, urine, soiled bedding, litter trays or other animal waste.
- Staff will use appropriate disposable gloves and, where necessary, protective clothing when cleaning animal housing, handling faeces or soiled bedding.
- Staff will wash their hands thoroughly after removing gloves and after completing animal-care activities.
- Animal waste will be disposed of safely and promptly.
- Animal bedding, cleaning equipment and other potentially contaminated items will be kept away from children's food, eating and food-preparation areas.
- Cat litter trays, where applicable, will be cleaned daily using disposable gloves and will not be located near food preparation, food storage or eating areas. Pregnant staff must not clean cat litter trays because of the risk of toxoplasmosis.
- Animals showing signs of illness, infection, aggression or distress will not be allowed to have contact with children and will be removed from the setting where necessary pending veterinary advice.
- If an animal bites, scratches or otherwise injures a child or adult, appropriate first-aid procedures will be followed, the incident will be recorded and parents/carers will be informed where appropriate.
- Any suspected infection associated with animal contact will be managed in accordance with the setting's infection-control procedures and relevant public health advice.
- Animals will never be used in a way that causes them unnecessary stress, pain, fear or discomfort. Their welfare will remain the responsibility of the setting and the person responsible for the animal.

### **Animals brought into the setting by visitors**

- Animals brought into the setting by visitors must be agreed with the setting manager in advance.
- The owner remains responsible for the animal and must provide appropriate supervision and control at all times.
- The setting will consider whether the animal is suitable before agreeing to the visit.
- The animal must be healthy and must not have recently been ill or show signs of illness, infection, distress or aggressive behaviour.
- A risk assessment will be completed where appropriate, considering the animal, the children involved, allergies, infection risks, handling arrangements and emergency procedures.

- Children will be supervised at all times when animals are present.
- Children will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and running water after contact with animals.
- Animals will be kept away from food preparation and eating areas.
- Animal faeces, urine and bedding will not be accessible to children.
- The setting may refuse or cancel an animal visit where it considers that the animal presents an unacceptable risk or where its welfare cannot be adequately protected.

### **Visits to farms, zoos and other animal attractions**

- All visits involving animals will be planned in accordance with the setting's **Outings Procedure** and will be subject to an appropriate risk assessment.
- The risk assessment will consider the specific venue, animal-contact arrangements, infection risks, handwashing facilities, children's ages and individual needs, staffing and supervision, allergies, weather, footwear and transport arrangements.
- The venue's own health and safety information and relevant visitor guidance will be reviewed before the visit where available.
- Where appropriate, the setting will contact the venue in advance to check for any current health, safety or animal-disease concerns that could affect the visit.
- Children will be supervised closely around animals and will not be allowed to touch animals that appear ill or distressed.
- Children will avoid contact with animal faeces, manure, dung, bedding and other visibly contaminated areas.
- Children will not eat or drink in areas where animals can be touched.
- Children will not kiss animals or put their hands in their mouths during animal contact.
- Children and adults will wash their hands thoroughly with **soap and running water** immediately after touching animals or areas where animals are kept and before eating or drinking.
- Hand sanitiser will not be used as a substitute for proper handwashing following animal contact.
- Staff will supervise younger children to ensure that hands are washed properly.
- Outdoor footwear used on farms or other animal-contact sites will be cleaned before returning to the nursery. Where appropriate, footwear will be changed before children enter indoor areas, particularly areas where children crawl or play on the floor.
- Staff will take appropriate precautions when handling pushchairs, footwear, clothing or equipment that may have been contaminated during the visit.
- Children will not be permitted to bring animal feed into their mouths or to eat food that has been in contact with the ground or animal areas.
- Staff will follow current public health advice concerning any reported outbreak or infectious disease risk at a proposed venue.
- Staff or volunteers who are pregnant, or who may be pregnant, will be advised to avoid close contact with livestock that are giving birth, including sheep, and should seek appropriate medical advice where necessary.
- Where a visit presents a significant or unmanaged risk, the manager will consider postponing, changing or cancelling the visit.

### **Infection control and hygiene**

Impact Montessori Nursery recognises that healthy-looking animals can carry organisms capable of causing illness in humans. Particular care will therefore be taken with young children because they may be more likely to put their fingers in their mouths.

The setting will follow current UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) infection-prevention guidance, including:

- thorough handwashing after contact with animals;
- keeping animals and animal equipment away from food preparation and eating areas;

- appropriate cleaning of animal areas and equipment;
- prompt management of animal waste;
- preventing children from touching animal faeces or contaminated bedding;
- appropriate use of gloves and other PPE for cleaning contaminated materials; and
- additional precautions where children, staff or visitors have particular health needs.

Where there is a suspected outbreak or illness associated with animal contact, the setting will seek appropriate advice from the local Health Protection Team and/or other relevant health professionals.

## **Animal welfare**

Impact Montessori Nursery will ensure that any animal kept at or brought into the setting is treated with care and respect.

The setting will consider the animal's:

- need for a suitable environment;
- need for a suitable diet;
- need to exhibit normal behaviour;
- need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals where appropriate;
- need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease; and
- need for appropriate veterinary care.

The person responsible for an animal will ensure that its welfare needs are understood and met in accordance with the **Animal Welfare Act 2006** and relevant veterinary advice.

## **Records**

The setting will retain, where applicable:

- animal risk assessments;
- veterinary and vaccination records;
- parasite-treatment records;
- details of the person responsible for the animal;
- arrangements for holiday and emergency care;
- records of significant incidents involving animals; and
- relevant information provided by venues before animal-related outings.

Risk assessments will be reviewed regularly and whenever there is a significant change, including a change in animal, premises, children's needs, staffing or identified risks.

## **Legal framework**

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers**, current version.
- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974**
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
- **Animal Welfare Act 2006**
- **Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981**, where applicable
- **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)**, where applicable to work activities involving biological agents or other hazardous substances
- **Equality Act 2010**, where applicable

## **Further guidance**

- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), **Preventing and controlling infections in children and young people's settings**
- UKHSA, **Specific settings and populations: additional health protection considerations in children and young people's settings**
- UKHSA, **Avoiding infection on farm visits: advice for the public**
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE), **Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions or open farms**
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE), guidance on **zoonoses and children on farms**

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are changes to legislation, EYFS requirements, public health guidance or the animals kept at or brought into the setting.

**This policy was adopted by:** Impact Montessori Nursery

**On:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date to be reviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed on behalf of the management:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of signatory:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Role of signatory:** \_\_\_\_\_