

3.6 Animals in the Setting Policy

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3: Safety & suitability of premises, environment and equipment

3.6 Animals in the Setting Policy

Policy Statement

At Miss B's Nursery, children are encouraged to explore and learn about the natural world, including animals and other living things, as part of the **Learning and Development Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**. Experiences involving animals can help children develop curiosity, empathy and respect for living creatures while supporting their understanding of the environment.

Occasionally, the nursery may organise themed learning activities, such as **"Pet Week"**, where children have opportunities to observe or interact with animals in a safe and controlled environment. These experiences help children build confidence, develop empathy and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them.

However, Miss B's Nursery recognises that some animals—particularly dogs—may present risks to young children, and some children may be frightened of animals or have allergies. For this reason, the nursery operates a **no-dogs-on-site policy**, except during planned educational activities such as Pet Week or where a legally recognised assistance dog is present.

Parents or carers arriving with dogs are asked to either leave them in their vehicle while dropping off or collecting their child or to secure them safely away from the nursery entrance.

This policy supports children's rights under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, including:

- **Article 3** – The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.
- **Article 24** – Children have the right to good health and a safe environment.
- **Article 29** – Education should help children understand the natural world.
- **Article 31** – Children have the right to play and explore their environment.

Miss B's Nursery ensures that any interaction between children and animals is carefully planned, risk-assessed and supervised so that children can learn safely.

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3.6.1 Educational animal visits

During activities such as **Pet Week**, parents and carers may be invited to bring animals into the nursery to support children's learning.

When animals are brought into the setting:

- The nursery encourages **small, calm and suitable pets** that can be safely managed around children.
- Where dogs are involved, staff seek reassurance that the breed and temperament are suitable for interaction with young children.
- The owner must remain present at all times to supervise and control the animal.
- The DfE and Ofsted prohibit the delivery of early years provision on any premises where a banned dog breed is present or kept. This includes dogs classified under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (such as the XL Bully, Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, and Fila Brasileiro). Banned breeds are explicitly deemed incompatible with childcare settings, even with a Certificate of Exemption

Before any animal visit takes place, the nursery completes a **written risk assessment** to identify potential hazards and establish appropriate control measures.

3.6.2 Safety procedures during animal visits

To ensure that animal visits are safe and positive experiences for children, the nursery follows these procedures:

- Parents and carers are informed in advance of any planned animal visits so that allergies, fears or medical issues can be identified.
- Dogs are initially kept **outdoors**, allowing children to observe them from a safe distance.
- Children are encouraged to **approach the animal calmly** rather than have the animal approach them.

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- Dogs must remain **on a lead and under the control of their owner** at all times.
- The animal's handler explains to children **how and where they may gently stroke the animal** and whether feeding it is appropriate.
- Staff carefully supervise all interactions between children and animals.

Children are encouraged to behave calmly and respectfully when near animals.

3.6.3 Hygiene and infection control

Maintaining high standards of hygiene is essential when children interact with animals.

Miss B's Nursery ensures that:

- Children **clean their hands using wipes or gel and then wash their hands thoroughly** after touching animals.
- Children **do not eat or drink** while near animals.
- Children **do not consume food** intended for animals.
- Children are reminded not to put their **fingers in their mouths** while near animals.
- Children are reminded **not to kiss animals**.
- Staff supervise interactions to ensure safe and hygienic practices.

These procedures help protect children from infection and support a healthy environment.

3.6.4 Animal waste and cleanliness

Where animals visit the nursery premises, steps are taken to maintain cleanliness and safety.

- A **pooper scooper** or similar equipment will be available.
- Any animal waste will be cleaned up immediately.

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- Surfaces or areas used by animals will be cleaned if necessary.

These measures help reduce the risk of infections such as **toxocariasis**.

3.6.5 Visiting animals and permanent pets

Miss B's Nursery primarily welcomes **visiting animals for educational purposes** rather than keeping permanent animals within the nursery environment.

If the nursery ever considers keeping a permanent animal, staff will ensure that:

- The animal is suitable for a nursery environment.
- The animal's welfare is carefully considered.
- children's allergies or medical needs are taken into account.
- Appropriate risk assessments and hygiene procedures are implemented.

Parents would be consulted before any decision to keep a permanent animal in the setting.

3.6.6 Therapy animals and assistance dogs

Miss B's Nursery recognises that some individuals rely on **assistance dogs**, such as guide dogs or hearing dogs.

Where a parent, visitor or professional attending the nursery uses an assistance dog:

- The dog will be permitted access to the premises in accordance with equality legislation.
- The dog must always remain under the control of its handler.
- Staff will supervise children and explain how to behave calmly around the dog.

Children will be reminded not to distract assistance dogs while they are working.

If therapy animals are introduced as part of a planned learning activity, the nursery will ensure:

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- A **risk assessment is completed beforehand.**
 - The animal is suitable for working with young children.
 - Interactions are supervised carefully.
 - Hygiene procedures are followed.
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3.6.7 Animal welfare

Miss B's Nursery recognises the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect.

When animals visit the nursery:

- Their welfare is carefully considered.
- Animals are **never forced** into situations that may cause distress.
- Children are encouraged to treat animals **gently and respectfully.**
- Animals are given space to rest and are not overwhelmed by too many children at once.

Children are taught that animals are living beings that require care, patience and kindness.

These experiences help children develop empathy and respect for living creatures, supporting their emotional development and understanding of the natural world.

Through careful planning, supervision and hygiene practices, Miss B's Nursery ensures that animal-related experiences are **safe, educational and enjoyable**, supporting children's learning and wellbeing while also respecting the welfare of the animals involved.
