

Beech Hill Primary School



Chicken Policy

July 2024

Next Review: September 2026

1. Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with pets. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with hatching and taking care of the chickens. As chickens are not one of the most popular pets, it is more than likely that children will only have some exposure and experience while at school.

2. Care & Housing of School Pets

Regular maintenance includes keeping cages clean and providing fresh food and drinking water. Housing must allow each animal enough room to move around and to escape the attention of students and of other animals. It must be secure enough to prevent the animals' escape. Enclosures must be well ventilated and provide protection against extremes of heat and light. Wire cages should also be checked for any protruding wires that could injure the animal or a child.

Appropriate food, bedding, must be provided.

Periodic handling is good for some species, but students should be taught how to pick up, hold, and touch the chickens to minimize the risk of escape or injury. Only those students mature enough to handle the animal appropriately should be allowed this privilege, and they should always be carefully supervised. No stressful or harmful procedures should ever be allowed on a chicken.

3. Responsible Caregiving

A designated teacher will be the chickens primary caregiver, and are best qualified to meet its needs over weekends and holidays. Changes in its care and environment can severely stress some animals. During school breaks, chickens will be cared for by a designated teacher, either at school or at the home of the teacher. The school caretaker will be available as an alternate caregiver to provide temporary care if designated teacher is unavailable or if inclement weather unexpectedly forces a school closing.

4. Health and Veterinary Care

Female mammals often do better in group housing situations than males do because they may be less territorial and less likely to fight, causing injuries. The chickens will be registered with a local veterinary practice to ensure professional care and advice can be provided. Parents and guardians will be provided with information about the chickens, the purpose of acquiring them (how its care will fit into the curriculum), and a plan for how any injuries (bites, scratches) will be managed should they arise.

5. Responsibilities:

The responsible adults is considered the animal's guardian/caregiver, and is responsible for ensuring that all of the animal's physical and psychological needs are met.

The animal's guardian is responsible for:

- researching the animal's species and consulting reliable sources (veterinarian, humane educator) regarding appropriate diet, housing, exercise, and socialization
- ensuring that the animal is fed appropriately, handled properly, and that its habitat is cleaned regularly; using logs to track feedings and cleanings is recommended
- taking the animal home during weekends and holidays (if applicable)

Other criteria:

- classroom pets are not permitted to breed; if several animals of the same species are being maintained as classroom pets, males and females should be kept separate at all times
- students will only handle the animal under direct supervision of an adult
- if students are given responsibilities for feeding the animal or cleaning the animal's habitat, this will be assigned as a reward not as a punishment, and students will be supervised during all interactions
- students must wash their hands prior to and after handling the classroom pet or cleaning its habitat

6. Injuries from the chickens

Scratches and pecks – cleaned by supervising adult with appropriate equipment

- Pupils are briefed on working safely with the chickens, including proper animal handling procedure. They are reminded not to hold the chickens in front of their faces or to push their fingers through the bars of the run.
- Claws are trimmed if necessary
- Any birds that are consistently aggressive towards the children will be re-homed or culled.

7. Injuries from chicken housing and equipment

Scratches, cuts, splinters, bruises.

- The chicken house and run are checked on a regular schedule for maintenance issues.
- Lightweight feeders, drinkers and appropriately sized tools are used.
- Pupils are briefed on safe tool use.
- Pupils are not permitted to carry heavy items such as bedding bales.

Accidents

Slips and trips.

- Appropriate first aid arrangements in place at all times
- Emergency procedure in place
- Suitable footwear to be worn
- Pupils entering the chicken area to be limited to a safe number.
- The working areas to be kept as clear as trip hazards as possible, for example brooms, hose pipes and shovels will be cleared away immediately after use.

8. Existing control measures

- Pupils are given hygiene and safety briefings before working with the chickens. They are reminded not to touch their faces or put anything in their mouths while working with the chickens and they are required to wash their hands immediately afterwards. They are reminded not to kiss the chickens.
- Pupils are not permitted to eat and drink in the chicken areas.
- Hand-washing signage is in place to remind anyone who has touched the chickens or their housing/ equipment to wash their hands.
- Hand gel may be used for immediate visible contamination but additional hand-washing remains compulsory.
- Fresh cuts and grazes are covered before working with the chickens.
- The chicken house and run/ free ranging area is kept suitably clean with the hen house, perches and equipment disinfected on a regular schedule.
- Pupils are not permitted to play in areas where chicken waste is disposed of, for example around compost heaps.
- There are no transmissible diseases that can be contracted from the chickens, the eggs came from a government accredited hatchery. All the parent stock are vaccinated against transmissible diseases. Parent stock are also tested for salmonella.

9. Reasons for having chickens in school

Not only do they experience life cycles and growth and development, the programme encourages social interaction and promotes caring and nurturing skills.

Social Development - Empathy through caring for another living thing. The connections in our natural world between plants, animals, and people. Practice overcoming anxieties, especially animal-related anxieties. Responsibility – feeding schedules, collecting eggs, **keeping chickens** safe.

As a reward: chicks will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the children. The children who have performed incredibly well during the week or those that have made progress in a certain subject, or those that have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded by spending time during break to interact with the chicks. Watching the chickens, cleaning, feeding, petting are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. Animals and new experiences improve children's social skills and self-esteem.

Associated Documents

Living eggs in schools – www.livingeggs.co.uk

Class room pets – https://www.mspca.org/cruelty_prevention/classroom-pets-the-humane-way-2/