



Animals in Nursery Policy

This nursery is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

Created: January 2026

To be reviewed: January 2027

Research around keeping animals in education settings has shown that:

- Animals can have a calming effect and reduce levels of anxiety
- Children are more motivated to think and learn as children generally have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- Encourages a respect and reverence for life for children
- Children gain a sense of responsibility
- Animals teach children to nurture and respect life
- Often lead to the development of hobbies or careers in animal care
- Can improve communication skills

Little Learners Nursery Group believes that interaction with animals has a hugely beneficial effect on our children and as such the smallholding was set up to allow this interaction. The smallholding and animals are an integral part of the education at the nursery. Caring and walking the Alpaca's is used as a therapy for those who appreciate the calming effect these animals have on them.

Joe Pitchford is registered as the Primary Contact when dealing with any of the above bodies and as such they ensure all Animal Movement, Veterinary Medicine and Holding Registers are kept up to date.

All animal information and registers are kept in a file in the Premises Managers office.

Our Animals:

We currently have the following animals in the school and nursery grounds:

- Alpacas
- Ball Python

The Nursery Executive Leader and/or Head Teacher must be consulted before any new animals are brought into school and may decide to seek further advice before allowing the animal to come onto the school site.

Caring for our Animals

At Little Learners Nursery Group, we aim to promote good practice in animal care. Joe Pitchford is responsible for the welfare of the school animals and alongside the senior nursery practitioners supervises the children's contact with animals. Children are encouraged to take a shared responsibility for the care of the animals, under supervision and are taught how to interact with them correctly. Animal related activities include:

- Daily feeding of animals
- Alpaca care

All activities are supervised by a member of staff.

Handling animals

To ensure animals become used to humans, they should be handled as often as possible; the more they are handled the more trusting they will become.

Children should only handle any of the nursery animals when supervised by a member of staff.

When handling animals it is important that good hygiene is maintained.

When handling animals:

- No food and drink should be consumed.
- Any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms must be covered with waterproof adhesive dressings.
- Hands must be washed with soap and water before and directly after handling animals.
- Animals must be kept away from the face.

Careful handling of animals is most important and children are advised on how to approach the animals and how and where they should be touched. The animals should be restrained sufficiently so that they cannot damage themselves or the handler.

Allergies

Although rare, allergic reactions to animals cannot be discounted. They may result from handling the animals or just being near them and be detected by the development of skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties, hand washing immediately after handling will help. A parental consent form is obtained prior to children being allowed to interact with the animals and nursery staff watch for the development of any allergic reactions in children who come into contact with our animals. Children with known allergic reactions to specific animals must have restricted access to those that may trigger a response. In most cases an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart; in extreme cases medical advice would be sought.

Diseases and parasites

The likelihood of diseases being passed on to humans from animals is low. In order for there to be minimal risk to humans of diseases being transmitted the nursery ensures that all animals are obtained from reputable sources.

E. coli 0157 (Alpacas)

All animals naturally carry a range of microorganisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans, where they may cause ill health, which in some cases may be severe or life threatening. The organism can be spread to humans by hand to mouth contact, e.g. hands contaminated with E. coli O157 from fecal sources coming into contact with the mouth. Children, especially those under 5 years old, are particularly at risk as they are most likely to put contaminated fingers or items in their mouths (including thumb sucking, nail biting and dummies/toys).

Children, staff or other adults may become infected when they come into contact with animal feces or saliva by:

- Feeding, stroking or touching animals through gates or pens
- Touching gates, or animal pen divisions

- Picking up contaminated feed from the floor
- Removing contaminated footwear or clothing
- Eating or drinking with contaminated hands
- Using contaminated play equipment
- Touching personal items taken on to the premises that have become contaminated e.g. dropped toys or dummies and pushchair wheels.

Controlling the risk of E. coli contamination

Premises layout and routes:

- Alpacas are kept separately in a designated pen
- Routes around the premises will prevent staff, children and visitors from walking too close to the alpaca pen.
- Prevention of non-authorized access to the alpaca pen will be managed by providing suitable fencing and warning signs
- The pen will be kept as clean as practicable and free from any build-up of feces.

Animal contact:

- Animal contact will be supervised by nursery staff at all times.
- Children are not allowed to enter the alpaca pen without an adult.
- Contact with the animals is in a designated petting zone through the fence.
- Visitors or parents will not be allowed to enter animal pens without a member of staff
- Fencing and other barriers are regularly inspected and properly maintained
- Pen divisions and gates are regularly cleaned and disinfected
- The nature area and walkways will be regularly inspected to ensure they are free from animal feces, bedding or run-off material
- Eating, drinking and putting contaminated items in mouths (including dummies) are prohibited in the petting zone (signs will be displayed instructing staff, children, parents and visitors of this requirement)

- The alpaca pen is positioned at a distance from the nature Zone that prevents children from reaching through to touch the animals and to prevent animals reaching over or through the fence to contact people.

Washing facilities:

Staff have responsibility for making sure that children, adults and other visitors wash their hands properly after coming into contact with the alpacas or the alpaca fencing and gates. Handwashing facilities are located in the Nature Zone room. Immediately after contact the use of hand sanitizer will be required or use of the hand washing basin. Before any food is consumed children re-wash their hands. Staff will supervise children to ensure they clean hands thoroughly after handling the alpacas.

Information and signs:

This includes notices on the alpaca pen to remind staff, children, parents and visitors how to limit the risk of contamination for themselves and for the animals e.g. washing hands after contact.

Training and supervision:

Nursery staff are trained and instructed about the human health risks associated with animals and the necessary control measures. Adequate and appropriate levels of supervision is provided in contact areas and children are supervised while they wash their hands.

Animal Health

The setting is registered with a veterinary practice that has records of all smallholding animals kept on site. If an animal is showing signs of ill health and Joe Pitchford feels it necessary a vet will be called out. If one of the smallholding animals dies it must be disposed of following the correct procedures as set out by DEFRA. If the animal died due to a suspected disease a vet must be called for advice and the smallholding area must be put into quarantine.

Appropriate and secure housing is purchased according to the animal, to keep them safe and contained and ensure that our children's safety is maintained at all times.

Animals are given any appropriate vaccinations and treatments as necessary.

Although children are involved with caring for the animals, cleaning out of the animals is carried out by the premises manager using the necessary protective equipment. Any disinfectants and cleaning products used during cleaning the animals housing will be safe to be used in the presence of children, though chemicals will not be used directly by them and will be kept out of reach at all times.

All feeding equipment such as bowls, bottles etc. will be cleaned and stored separately from human utensils in a suitable place away from children.

Nursery visitors

The alpacas may be accessible to visitors. Disclaimer notices are displayed and information signs provided.

Risk Assessments

To minimize the likelihood of accidents or injuries risk assessments are carried out that cover all activities within the smallholding. Staff who bring their pets into the setting are responsible for carrying out a risk assessment which must be approved by the Nursery Principal prior to the animal being brought on site. If an animal has a history of biting or scratching it should not be brought on site. Risk assessments are stored in the school office and reviewed annually or if there is an incident.

Accidents

Due to the nature of the outdoor environment and the unpredictability of animals, occasional accidents or injuries are inevitable. Full risk assessments must be undertaken for both the day to day activities in the smallholding and all types of animals brought into the school grounds.

If an accident or incident occurs it must be reported immediately and an accident form completed. Following the accident/incident the risk assessment that covers the area must be reviewed and amended as necessary to lessen the chance of the same thing happening again. Should the same type of accident/incident reoccur a review of that activity should take place and changes made or the activity discontinued.

If an injury occurs that requires first aid a suitably trained member of staff will administer initial first aid. If it is thought that the injury requires more than first aid a visit to the doctors will be arranged or an ambulance called.

If an animal is repeatedly aggressive or bites or kicks, arrangements should be made for its removal from the site.

Clothing and footwear

Correct clothing and footwear must be worn when undertaking activities with the animals or in the smallholding. Parents should supply children with wellington boots for use when it is wet or muddy, waterproof coats should be worn when it is raining. Gloves should be worn when helping in animal clubs or when cleaning animal buildings.