

Pet Policy - Tortoise

Date of last Review: Autumn 2026
Review in: Autumn 2028

Kirk Ella St Andrews Community Primary School

Pet Policy - Tortoises

Introduction

At Kirk Ella St Andrew's Community Primary School, we want our children to leave as well-rounded, knowledgeable, lifelong learners, who have strong emotional resilience and good wellbeing. A school pet has been shown to benefit children both educationally and emotionally; it can increase children's understanding of responsibility and develop their empathy and nurturing skills. In addition, children and staff take great enjoyment from interaction with animals, impacting on their mental health and wellbeing.

Is There a Risk to Bringing a Tortoise into the School Environment?

Yes, there is however, it is a manageable risk. A risk assessment has been carried out for the whole school and individual risk assessments will be undertaken for anyone with specific medical or emotional needs.

School Policy

- The tortoises will be paid for by the PTA and responsibility of Mr Cockshutt with assistance from other willing staff.
- The governors/headteacher have the right to request the tortoises to be removed from the school grounds.
- Only the school tortoises will be allowed onto the school premises. All other animals must not enter the school site. The headteacher should be informed of this before entry and should approve this.
- The tortoises are of a considerable age and are accustomed to people and noise. In general tortoises are known to be of good temperament and rarely aggressive.
- The governing body agree that school pets benefit the school community.
- Staff, parents/carers and children have been informed by letter that the tortoises will be in the school.
- The risk assessment will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Children, staff, and visitors known to have allergic reactions or are uncomfortable around animals may choose not to have any physical contact with the tortoises.
- If the tortoises are ill, they will not be permitted to stay at school and must be taken to a staff members home.
- The tortoise will be carried in a box when moving between classrooms or around the school. They will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- If a tortoise is place out of their enclosures, an adult must ensure there is no-one else there that is not intended to be, and the adult supervises the tortoise at all times until returned to their enclosure.
- Children must never be left alone with the tortoises; appropriate adult supervision must be always in place.

- Children should be reminded of appropriate behaviour around the tortoises. Children should:
    - remain calm
    - not make sudden movements
    - not make loud noises
    - try not to run around them
    - not eat around them
    - always ask the handler if they are allowed to stroke the tortoise beforehand
    - always let the handler know if they are worried about meeting the tortoise
    - always let the handler know if they are allergic
    - always wash hands after stroking the tortoise
    - not touch the tortoise near its head
- Children should not disturb the tortoises while they are sleeping.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the tortoise.
- Everyone should wait until the tortoise is on the floor before touching/stroking.
- If the tortoises are surrounded by a large number of children, they could become agitated or nervous; therefore, the adult in charge of the tortoises must ensure that they monitor the situation.
- Children should be careful to stroke the tortoise only across their shells, not by their head.
- The tortoise will have their own designated enclosures which will be maintained and cleaned on a regular basis.
- Parents may opt out of allowing their child to come into contact with the school tortoise.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and evidence of the interactions and impact of the school tortoise.
- Year One staff will always know the whereabout of the tortoises.
- The tortoise will be included in the fire and evacuation procedures, under the supervision of the Year One staff.
- If someone reports any issue with the school tortoise, this information must be passed to the headteacher or school business manager as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the headteacher or school business manager, in line with the complaints policy.
- Public Liability Insurance has been purchased by the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for pets in school. The headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. School staff, children, parents/carers and visitors into school are required to adhere to this policy. The curriculum will support learning about our school tortoise and about how to behave sensibly around the tortoise. This will include highlighting that animals although pets are not all well trained, and that caution must be used around unknown animals outside of school.

Reasons to Have a Tortoise in School

Our school tortoises, who lives in Year One. The children can come in to feed him, help clean his enclosure, bath him and stroke his shell.

Tortoises are quite symbolic. They take slow and steady steps reminding us to be mindful and to slow down sometimes in this very busy world we live in.

There are many benefits to having a pet in school. Research has shown some of the benefits to be as follows:

- Benefit children's social and emotional development.
- Have a calming effect on children, particularly those with emotional or behavioural needs.
- Improve behaviour and concentration, reduce stress, and improve self-esteem.
- Encourage expression and participation in children.
- Foster a sense of responsibility.
- Motivate children to think and learn, as children have a high level of natural interest and enthusiasm in animals.
- Encourage respect for others, improving children's relationships with other children, staff and parents/carers.
- Teach children to nurture and to have respect for life.
- Help children build confidence in reading, increasing literacy skills.
- Reduce children's anxieties.
- Where there is a fear of animals, reduce this fear.
- Improve attendance and willingness to attend school.

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RISK ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT - Pet Tortoise

Risk Factor Calculation Risk Factor = Probability Factor X Severity Factor		
Risk Factor	**Category**	**Action**
1-5	Low	Routine Action
6-10	Acceptable	Employ Safety Systems
11-15	Marginal	Reduce Risk / Employ All Safety Systems
16-20	Undesirable	Maximum Caution / Close Supervision
21-25	Unacceptable	Must not be allowed

Risk Assessment Guide Table			
Hazard Probability	**Probability Factor**	**Hazard Severity**	**Severity Factor**
Very Unlikely	1	Insignificant	1
Remote	2	Minor – Light Damage	2
Fair Chance	3	Moderate – Damage/Injury	3
Very Likely	4	Serious – Damage/Injury	4
Almost Certain	5	Dangerous - Fatal	5

Risks	**Probability Factor**	**Severity Factor**	**RISK Factor**	**Control Measures**
Slip / Trip / Falls Trip over the wire for the UV lamp/tortoise	3	4	12	Staff aware of their environment, good housekeeping at all times. Clear up when necessary.
Burns UV Lamp	3	3	9	Staff aware of their environment, good housekeeping at all times. Clear away / turn off when necessary.

Scratches/Bites	3	2	5	Staff present at all times to supervise and advise on safe handling. Children made aware that tortoise may bite.
Carrying animals around school	3	3	9	Only staff to carry animals around school.
Allergies	3	4	12	Establish if anyone has any relevant allergies before any contact is undertaken/permitted
Health hazard from animal waste	2	4	8	Good housekeeping always. Daily checks of enclosure and remove faeces. All waste is cleared away immediately if tortoise out of enclosures.
Spread of germs	4	4	16	Students given anti-bacterial gel to cleanse their hands after handling the animals. Asked to also wash their hand thoroughly. Children told to keep their hands away from their hands away from mouths or attempts to kiss animals. Check that cuts, grazes etc on children's hands are covered with a waterproof dressing.
Electrical Cables/Heat Lamps	3	4	12	All cables and equipment tidied and secured away or positioned behind display area away from public access