

## **Guinea Pigs @ St Bart's – School Pet Policy 2023**

Current research is suggesting that a 'companion' animal in school can make a difference to the wellbeing of both staff and pupils. With this in mind, St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School has become the home for two Guinea Pigs, Miggy and Bruno. The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

- For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow
- For the animal to be properly cared for during and outside of the school day
- To have a pet that the children could interact with and be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development. It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children, but, for some, it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. In order for Miggy and Bruno to be successfully and safely integrated into the life of the school, a risk assessment has been undertaken (see separate document.) The safety of children and the Guinea Pigs is paramount. We must also ensure that a pet in school can have as natural a life as possible while in the school building.

The following precautions have been undertaken:

1. Research into the most appropriate pet that could be well-suited to working and playing with children.
2. Miggy and Bruno have come from a reputable breeder, known to the school.
3. The Guinea Pigs are regularly groomed and checked for any infections or illnesses.
4. Visits to the vet will take place as required.
5. Miggy and Bruno's claws are trimmed to reduce the risk of scratching.
6. They have plenty of exercise.
7. Work is also being undertaken to ensure that children know how to approach Guinea Pigs and how to behave when around them.
8. Miggy and Bruno live with named staff and a named parent when not at school. All will ensure that they are healthy and fit to be in school at all times.
9. We appreciate that not all families and children are comfortable with Guinea Pigs and will respect parental wishes for any child not to come into direct contact with Miggy or Bruno.
10. Miggy and Bruno will be in their hutch or run when with children, except in controlled supervised circumstances.
11. Any 'mess' will be cleaned up and safely disposed of.
12. The risk assessment is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the Governing Body.