



Activity covered by this risk assessment – Guinea pigs

Risk assessment completed by Shauna McElhill (Class teacher)

Date: March 2026

Review date: March 2027

What are the benefits?

- motivate children to think and to learn, as they have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- encourage a respect and reverence for life in children and thereby improve their relationships with their peers, parents and teachers
- foster a sense of responsibility in children
- teach children to nurture and respect life
- improve academic achievement
- teach children about animal welfare and care
- improve wellbeing

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are we doing to manage the risk?	Review
Scratches, bites, nips etc	Guinea Pigs: being dropped Children and adults: being bitten, skin broken, bleeding	Children taught how to safely hold and look after guinea Pigs to limit animals becoming stressed. Adults will ensure that guinea pigs are calm before being picked up. If guinea pigs are being carried from one location to another over a distance they should be transferred into a small box to ensure their safety. Scratches, nips and biting cannot be avoided altogether. Appropriate first aid precautions and training in place.	

		Children only allowed to handle any animal under staff supervision. Children warned not to put fingers through bars. Guinea Pigs were selected for their calm temperament	
Safety and care of animals	Guinea pigs: being harmed, unclean environment, not enough access to food and water	Children to understand high expectations regarding their behaviour around the guinea pigs. SMcE check the guinea pigs daily for signs of stress. Signs of stress or illness: • weight loss (from weekly weigh-in) • hiding- isolating itself from the other guinea pig and the children • seeming overly nervous • sleeping more than normal • hair loss • poor appetite. SMcE will lead the cleaning and care (food, water, grooming) of the guinea Pigs. Signs of good health: • agile • clear and bright eyes • clean nose, clean ears • fur is clean and matt free • fur is brushed on a daily basis • nails are a good length • feet should not be sore • teeth should a good length	

		• good appetite • interacting with children the other guinea pig • alert • squeaks, whistles, wheeks, popcorning (small jumps) and purring. If any of the following are noticed a vet will be consulted: • Any sudden change in behaviour or habits (vocalizing more or less, scratching, licking, etc.) • Any change in eating or drinking (ingesting either more or less, refusing favourite foods, etc.) • Any change in appearance (loss of fur, swollen areas, squinty eyes, flaky skin, etc.) • Any unusual discharge from the body (runny nose or eyes, odd urine, bleeding, etc.) • Any change in movement (limping, unwillingness to move, etc.) • Any change in urination or faeces The guinea Pigs will stay in school overnight and weekends. During school holidays, SMcE will take them home. A secure and clean cage will ensure that they cannot escape, are not harmed and are healthy. The guinea Pigs will be kept in inside are in a quiet and calm environment.	
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	Handling including allergies	Children's parents or carers sign a consent form for the guinea pigs in March. This will allow parents to indicate whether they give consent for their child to be in contact with the guinea pigs. Children known to have allergic reactions to specific animals will have restricted access to those that may trigger a response. When handling guinea pigs, children will be under direct supervision. Children will not consume food or drink. Children will wash their hands with soap and water before and directly after handling the guinea pigs.	
Fear	Guinea pigs: stressed, being dropped Children and adults: stressed, scared.	Children will be given a choice in whether they want to hold the guinea Pigs. The guinea Pigs will be introduced slowly to the children.	