



# Tortoise Policy

*"Enjoying learning and growing together."*



*Respect*



*Persevere*



*Achieve*

|                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Coordinators:</b>          | Head Teacher and Early Years Lead |
| <b>First written:</b>         | January 2026                      |
| <b>Approved by Governors:</b> | TBC Feb 2026                      |
| <b>To be reviewed:</b>        | January 2028                      |
| <b>Updates:</b>               |                                   |

## Introduction

At West Denton 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.

The governors/headteacher have the right to request the tortoises to be removed from the school grounds.

Only the school tortoise 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.

## Our Tortoise

The tortoise is a considerable age (DOB 2022) and accustomed to people and noise. In general Horsefield 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 tortoise

## Care

If the tortoise is 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 and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times.

If the tortoise is placed 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 tortoise; appropriate adult supervision must be always in place.

Children should be reminded of appropriate behaviour around the tortoises. Children should:

- Remain calm, do not make sudden movements or not make loud noises

- Try not to run around them
- No eating 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 or poke inside of its shell
- 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.

## Responsibilities

Staff will always know the whereabouts of the tortoise.

The tortoise will be included in the fire and evacuation procedures, under the supervision Mrs McHatton

If someone reports any issue with the school tortoise, this information must be passed to the headteacher, as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the headteacher, in line with the complaints policy.

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
- The children can 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.

## Benefits

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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## Tortoise Risk Assessment

|                                                                |                                            |                                      |                                              |                                                           |                                      |                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Manager(s) involved in the Assessment:</b><br>Gavin Johnson | <b>Advising Health and Safety Officer:</b> | <b>Date Completed:</b><br>22/01/2026 | <b>Date of Previous Form if Any:</b><br>None | <b>Date Reviewed: (additions, amendments to be added)</b> | <b>Accident Statistics Attached:</b> | <b>Sheet Number</b><br>1 of 2 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|

| TYPICAL ACTIVITIES WITH HAZARD POTENTIAL | SIGNIFICANT RISKS TO HEALTH AND SAFETY                                                                    | PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE RISKS TO AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL (OR AVOID THEM ALTOGETHER),                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Tortoise Welfare                      | Tortoise could be at risk of illness or death if not looked after properly                                | Fact and handling sheets made for children (age appropriate) of do's and don'ts<br>Welfare sheet<br>Adult supervision at all times when children are around.<br>Not to be left to roam free in any classroom<br>Must be exercise daily<br>Food and clean water twice a day<br>Any faeces must be removed by and adult                                         |
| 2. Children around Tortoise              | May be bitten or scratched.<br>Transfer germs to mouth if hands aren't washed after handling<br>Allergies | Children to be supervised at all times by adults<br>Children not to touch the tortoises head or try to poke fingers into shell<br>Children must wash hands before and after handling<br>Children with Allergies – adult must be aware and take preventive measures<br>Children to follow the do's and don't handling sheet – adults to be aware at all times. |





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|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. Transferring Tortoise around school   | Tortoise could be at risk of injury or death  | Care to be take when lifting the tortoise – a green tray is for bathing and transporting from one school area to the other.                                   |
| 4. Tortoise roaming freely               | Potential to injury or death to tortoise      | Tortoise may be free to roam in a controlled circle time, however never free to roam freely around a classroom – must be supervised by an adult at all times. |
| 5. Children Hygiene                      | Risk of transfer of germs from hands to mouth | Children must wash their hands before and after handling the tortoise                                                                                         |
| Signed :                                 | Position:                                     | Date:                                                                                                                                                         |

