

Pet Policy – Iverna Gardens Montessori

Updated 23/10/2018

Pets can help meet the emotional needs of children and adults. Caring for pets also gives children the opportunity to learn how to be gentle and responsible for others and is part of their educational programme. At Iverna Gardens Montessori we have two gerbils and a fish tank.

Procedures:

All pets are brought with permission from the head. The pets must be suitable and safe for the nursery setting. Before any pets can be in the classroom, teachers need to make sure that children do not have an allergy or an unreasonable fear of the animals.

Gerbils:

Our pets should always be confined to a limited area (cage), this helps with cleaning. An appointed member of staff has overall responsibility for the care and welfare of the pets. Food and water is always available. They are kept in a clean cage. The gerbils are cleaned once a week, and a gerbil only scrubbing brush is used to ensure the highest level of hygiene is upheld; their bedding is disposed of instantly. Staff responsible for cleaning pets must wear gloves.

Always ensure that children and staff have thoroughly washed their hands using soap after touching animals or cleaning their quarters.

Children are reminded that they can't have their fingers in the gerbil cage.

Children are shown how to stroke the gerbils. All direct interactions with the gerbils are to be done with teachers. Children are spoken to about the gerbils and how we have to be careful and considerate with them as they are so much bigger than the gerbils and so as not to frighten them.

The gerbils are allowed out in a gerbil ball or a large box but never left to run loose as they may go missing.

Parents can sign up to look after the gerbils on the weekends and holidays if they want to. They are given food, talk to the appointed teacher about how to look after them, and told how their children can interact with the gerbils. They are encouraged to take pictures and put them in the gerbil book to share with their children's friends.

Fish:

Our fish are fed by the children who have to wash their hands with soap thoroughly with soap after feeding them. Feeding the fish is supervised and modelled by teachers to ensure that the children do not over feed them. The fish tank has to be plugged in at all times. There is a sign on the plug to remind everyone that it can't be taken out. The plug is hidden out of sight from the children as it is behind a shelf.

Maintenance of the fish tank:

The fish tank is maintained once a term; more if necessary. The maintenance consists of a partial water change (approx. 30%) and rinsing or replacing the filter media. The fresh water is conditioned with a chlorine and chloramine (used in mains water to allow human consumption) neutraliser to protect the fish. Because the cleanliness of the water, and the health of the fish, depends on the biological activity taking place in the filter, it is important that the bacterial cultures that populate the filter media be protected. The water temperature is kept at a level suitable for tropical fish. All equipment is supplied by the German aquarium manufacturer, Juwel, and is of the highest quality and safety.

Procedures for pets visiting (eg Animal man, guide dog, living eggs)

Before arranging any visits of animals, permission is sought from the head. Parental permission should be sought prior to any visit for children to observe or touch the animals. We will ensure that children are introduced to the animals in a quiet, controlled setting with teachers present to watch children. All children and adults should wash their hands thoroughly after contact with animals.

In the event of an emergency:

- Remove the animal to a secure setting away from the children.
- Keep children calm and safe.
- Notify parents at once.
- Seek medical assistance immediately if needed.