

Risk Assessment: Keeping Ducks in School

Risk assessment carried out by:	Headteacher	Date:	23 rd April 2026	Due for review on:	April 2027
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Please state the benefits to the children of offering this experience?

Active Learning

Studies show that children who engage in hands-on experiences with animals develop stronger problem-solving skills, creativity, and confidence. Caring for ducks enables children to actively engage in feeding, observing, and maintaining their environment.

Responsibility and Empathy

Caring for ducks supports children in understanding the importance of looking after living things. Through regular routines such as feeding and observing, children develop empathy, compassion, and a sense of responsibility.

Connection with their World

Ducks provide a meaningful way for children to connect with nature. Experiences with animals support early understanding of the natural world, habitats, and environmental awareness.

Healthy Eating

Where appropriate, duck eggs can support children's understanding of where food comes from and promote discussions around nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

The Lifecycle

Children are able to observe growth, change, and life processes, supporting their understanding of lifecycles in a real and engaging context.

Hazards	Who is at risk?	Existing Control Measures	Further action required, if any	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Completed
<p>Zoonotic disease</p> <p>Contact with duck faeces, contaminated water, housing, and equipment</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p> <p>Visitors</p>	<p>Pupils receive clear hygiene and safety briefings before any interaction with ducks or their environment.</p> <p>Strict handwashing procedures using soap and warm water are enforced immediately after contact.</p> <p>Handwashing signage displayed prominently in outdoor and transition areas.</p> <p>No eating, drinking, or use of dummies/pacifiers in duck areas.</p> <p>Children are actively reminded not to touch their face, mouth, or eyes during interaction.</p> <p>Any cuts, grazes, or broken skin are covered with waterproof dressings prior to activity.</p> <p>Outdoor footwear must be worn; indoor shoes are not permitted in duck areas</p> <p>Duck housing, feeding areas, and water sources are cleaned and disinfected regularly, with increased frequency due to wet conditions.</p> <p>Duck water is changed daily (or more frequently if contaminated) to reduce bacterial growth.</p> <p>Standing water is monitored to prevent contamination build-up.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes

		<p>Waste disposal areas (including bedding and faeces) are clearly designated and out of bounds to children.</p> <p>Pupils with compromised immune systems or specific medical needs are risk assessed and may be excluded from direct contact.</p> <p>Staff supervise all interactions closely to ensure hygiene expectations are consistently followed.</p>				
<p>Allergic reactions and respiratory problems</p> <p>Contact with feathers, straw or bedding materials and damp environments</p> <p>Allergic reaction-rashes, swelling, anaphylaxis</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p> <p>Visitors</p>	<p>Up to date records of children and staff allergies are maintained and shared with relevant staff.</p> <p>Individual risk assessments completed where required.</p> <p>Children with known allergies to feathers, dust, or bedding materials do not engage in higher-risk activities.</p> <p>Low-dust, animal-safe bedding is used to minimise airborne particles.</p> <p>Bedding changes are carried out by staff only, away from children where possible.</p> <p>Damp or mould-prone materials are removed promptly.</p> <p>Outdoor environments are well-ventilated to reduce build-up of allergens.</p> <p>Staff remain vigilant for signs of allergic reaction (e.g. rashes, breathing difficulty) and follow first aid procedures immediately.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes

		Emergency medication (e.g. EpiPens) accessible in line with medical care plans.				
<p>Injuries from the ducks</p> <p>Bites, pecks, wing flapping</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p> <p>Visitors</p>	<p>Children are taught and regularly reminded of safe behaviour around ducks (calm movements, quiet voices).</p> <p>Handling of ducks is limited and always directly supervised by experienced staff.</p> <p>Clear visual prompts/signage displayed to reinforce safe handling expectations. Ducks are not to be chased, cornered, or picked up independently by children.</p> <p>Children are positioned safely when observing or interacting (e.g. not at face level).</p> <p>Staff model correct handling techniques where appropriate.</p> <p>Ducks are regularly monitored for temperament and behaviour.</p> <p>Any signs of stress or aggression in ducks result in immediate removal of children from the area.</p> <p>Ducks deemed unsuitable for a school environment are rehomed.</p> <p>First aid provision available immediately in the outdoor area.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes
<p>Water Related Risks</p> <p>Slips, trips, water hazards</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p> <p>Visitors</p>	<p>All water sources (ponds, trays, paddling areas) are shallow, secure, and risk assessed.</p> <p>No unsupervised access to water areas at any time.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes

		<p>Adult to child ratios are carefully considered when water play is in use.</p> <p>Staff positioned strategically to maintain full visibility of all children.</p> <p>Non-slip mats or surfaces used where possible to reduce slip hazards.</p> <p>Spillages are addressed immediately.</p> <p>Water is refreshed regularly to maintain cleanliness and reduce risk of contamination.</p> <p>Containers are emptied, cleaned, and stored safely after use.</p> <p>Clear boundaries established so children understand safe zones.</p> <p>Additional controls implemented for younger children (e.g. the Nest), including closer supervision and reduced group sizes.</p>				
<p>Injuries from duck housing and equipment</p> <p>Cuts, slips, splinters</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p>	<p>Daily visual checks of duck housing, fencing, and equipment to identify hazards.</p> <p>Scheduled maintenance programme in place.</p> <p>All equipment selected to be age-appropriate, lightweight, and safe to handle.</p> <p>Splinter-free, smooth materials used where possible.</p> <p>Tools (e.g. brushes, buckets) used under supervision only.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes

		<p>Children are not permitted to carry heavy items or equipment.</p> <p>Storage areas are organised to minimise trip hazards.</p> <p>Clear routines established for setting up and packing away equipment safely.</p>				
<p>Illness or injury from contact with duck health care products</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p>	<p>All cleaning products stored securely in locked storage in line with COSHH regulations.</p> <p>COSHH risk assessments are in place and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Only trained staff handle cleaning and health-related products.</p> <p>Products are clearly labelled and used according to manufacturer guidance.</p> <p>Cleaning activities are carried out when children are not present or at a safe distance.</p> <p>PPE (e.g. gloves) used by staff when handling chemicals.</p> <p>Spill kits available where appropriate.</p>		<p>All staff</p>	<p>Current</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>Allergies</p> <p>Reactions, skin irritation, poisoning</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p> <p>Visitors</p>	<p>Handwashing routines strictly followed before and after sessions.</p> <p>Skin contact with contaminated water, mud, or faeces minimised.</p> <p>Protective clothing (e.g. gloves for staff) used where necessary.</p> <p>Spare clothing available in case of contamination.</p> <p>Parents informed of outdoor learning activities involving animals and water.</p> <p>Any skin reactions monitored and recorded in line with school procedures.</p>		<p>All staff</p>	<p>Current</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Accidents</p> <p>Slips and trips</p>	<p>Pupils</p> <p>Staff/ Supervisors</p> <p>Visitors</p>	<p>Suitable, well-fitting footwear required for all outdoor activities.</p> <p>Surfaces regularly checked and maintained to reduce uneven or slippery areas.</p> <p>Mud and water build-up managed proactively.</p> <p>Walkways kept clear of obstacles such as hoses, tools, and equipment.</p> <p>Children briefed on safe movement in outdoor environments.</p> <p>Group sizes managed to prevent overcrowding.</p> <p>First aid kits readily available and staff trained in paediatric first aid.</p> <p>Clear emergency procedures in place and understood by all staff.</p>		<p>All staff</p>	<p>Current</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Duck welfare	Pupils Staff/ Supervisors	<p>Daily checks to ensure ducks have access to fresh food and clean water.</p> <p>Clean, dry, and secure shelter provided at all times.</p> <p>Regular cleaning schedule in place, with increased frequency due to water use.</p> <p>Environmental enrichment provided to support natural behaviours.</p> <p>Protection from extreme weather conditions (shade, shelter, warmth).</p> <p>Secure housing to protect from predators.</p> <p>Clear rota in place for staff responsibility, including weekends and holidays.</p> <p>Veterinary advice sought where concerns arise.</p> <p>Careful introduction procedures followed when adding new ducks.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes
Egg safety	Pupils Staff/ Supervisors	<p>Eggs collected daily by staff or supervised groups.</p> <p>All eggs visually checked for damage and cleanliness.</p> <p>Dirty or cracked eggs disposed of immediately.</p> <p>Eggs stored appropriately in line with food safety guidance.</p> <p>Clear procedures in place for distribution to families.</p>		All staff	Current	Yes

		Children supervised at all times during egg collection.				
<p>Sir James Knott Nursery School operates under a dynamic risk assessing process which is the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, acting to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing, in the rapidly changing environment of working with children.</p> <p>Staff are requested to clearly brief their group/ class before or upon arrival and to set appropriate standards of behaviour in relation to the Health and Safety of the children, adults and ducks.</p>						

Signed: J. Croft	Position: Headteacher	Date: 24th April 2026
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