

School Dog Policy

Setting: Castle Newnham School

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A. RATIONALE

This policy is a statement of the strategy that staff at Castle Newnham School will employ in order to use animal therapy, specifically a dog, to support and improve the social and emotional welfare of pupils in school.

B. AIM

During the course of the school week, the school will use the dog to work with individual pupils as well as larger groups in a variety of circumstances and situations. These will be planned sessions to support pupils who the school feels will benefit from working with the dog.

C. PRINCIPLES

A growing amount of academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can have a positive impact on pupils. A more detailed overview of this research is found in Appendix 1, with the outline of the intended outcomes listed below:

- 1) Improve academic achievement
- 2) Increase literacy skills
- 3) Calm behaviour
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect for all living things
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 8) Motivate pupils who are often less attentive.

A range of broad, frequently asked questions can be found in Appendix 2. These may answer initial questions that families may have, with regards to the use of a dog in school.

D. PROCESSES

- As per guidance, the dog is not owned by the school but by the person who has paid for the dog. The owner assumes overall responsibility for the behaviour and welfare of the dog.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Principal has been informed beforehand and has approved this visit.
- The school dog has been chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training, is known to be good with children, and is very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents, and children will be informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been completed to ensure that the school has considered all aspects of risk.
- The dog will be insured to be on the school site and to work with children.
- Staff, visitors, and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs will not be permitted to go near or work with the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill, they will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms (or on a walk) and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their child access to the dog.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising them at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of trained staff.
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to a Vice Principal as soon as possible so that appropriate action can be taken.

At all times, contact with the dog will be through a named/approved handler in school. Children will be taught to ask permission before approaching the dog, how to interact with the dog, and how to stroke the dog:

- Pupils will not be left alone with the dog and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children will be reminded of appropriate behaviour and the need to remain calm around the dog.
- Children will not be allowed to go near or disturb the dog during sleep or rest periods.
- At all times, children will only ever approach or touch the dog under supervision.
- Children will be taught that dogs express their feelings through body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, a tail lowered or between the legs, hiding behind an owner, whining, or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs, they will be immediately removed from that situation or environment.
- No food will be offered to the dog (other than by its handler).
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, or back, and not by their face or the top of their head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog
- There will be a designated area for the dog to relieve itself. Only adults will clear any associated mess. Soiled dog waste bags will be disposed of appropriately.

E. MONITORING, ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Information to assist with the monitoring of the policy will be collected in the following ways:

- Pupil and parent feedback
- Staff feedback
- Attendance data
- Data recorded on SIMs related to achievement and behaviour incidents
- Records of exclusions
- External monitoring such as provided by the Local Authority, partner schools, Ofsted or other professional bodies.

This monitoring activity will allow us to evaluate the impact of the policy on pupil achievement.

A relevant risk assessment will be completed prior to the dog joining the school. This will be reviewed at least annually. An example is attached (appendix 3).

APPENDIX 1 (Summary of research)

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance:

Case study: Mandy was a pupil with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even to adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proven that pupils who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among their peers.

Social Development:

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils' social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older pupils use dogs

to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils.

With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs, is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

As a reward:

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Support Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

APPENDIX 2 (FAQs)

Q: Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A: The legal owner of the dog will be the person who has paid for the dog; they will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance for when the dog is in school.

Q: Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A: Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament. The dog is already well socialised with children.

Q: Will the dog be a distraction?

A: The dog will be kept in two areas of the school – The Pupil and Family Welfare Area whilst working and in the Vice Principal's office for rest periods. The office has a separate area that will be used for the dog and is separate from the classrooms / playground area. Access and use of the dog will be planned and supervised to avoid distractions.

Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A: Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including a reputable dog behaviourist.

Q: Who is responsible for training?

A: The legal owner of the dog and as a result will be responsible for its training. Appropriate adults will also be given training on safe handling of the dog.

Q: How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds behind the main office and away from children. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A: The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will only have planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q: How will this be managed where pupils have allergies?

A: Pupils with allergies will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. If allergies are more severe, pupils will not be given access to the dog.

Q: My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A: Any access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and pupils do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this if they wish.

APPENDIX 3 (Example Risk Assessment)

Insert name School

Topic:	Therapy Dog Risk Assessment				
Assessment carried out by:		Date:		Date of Review: (2 years or if circumstances change if sooner)	

Hazards/Risk (Potential to cause harm & consider how a person may be hurt)	Who is at Risk?	How can the hazards cause harm?	Normal Control Measures	Are Normal Control Measures Y/N/NA	
				In Place	Adequate
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children	Staff Pupils Visitors Dog	Child knocked to ground Child scratched by dog Child bitten by dog	- The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises and grounds. - Children are not left with the dog unsupervised. - The dog will always be on a lead when in school. - The dog will be trained to and discouraged from jumping up or licking the children. - The dog will undergo training or will have already been conditioned to deal with the school environment; this area of training will allow future reading and nurture intervention to involve the dog in a calm/therapeutic manner. - Children have been and will continue to be taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to the children and often to the whole school during assemblies, form time and PSHE lessons. - Share with pupils the Dogs' Trust's information on conduct 'Be Dog Smart' https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/professionals/education - Set out the expectations and clearly outline the dog's likes and dislikes. - There will be an agreed format for how to interact with the school dog. - Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, cross arms) https://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/be-dog-smart/ - The dog will only interact with pupils in a controlled environment and will not be on a lead out at break and lunchtimes. - No interaction will be made with any children unless the school has written permission from parents/guardians.		

Hazards/Risk (Potential to cause harm & consider how a person may be hurt)	Who is at Risk?	How can the hazards cause harm?	Normal Control Measures	Are Normal Control Measures Y/N/NA	
				In Place	Adequate
			- The school dog will be enclosed in an office with a tall gate, the dog will be on a lead when people come to interact with an authorised adult. - When moving around the school the dog is on a short lead. - Children will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing, licking or jumping up. - Children will be informed of/taught the correct way to treat an animal to safeguard the health and well-being of the dog. - All staff, visiting volunteers and children will be introduced gently to the dog. - The dog will attend the vets' regularly to make sure claws are kept short and general good health is maintained.		
The dog gets loose from his lead	Staff Pupils Visitors Dog	Child knocked to ground Child scratched by dog Child bitten by dog	- The dog area is big enough for the dog to be happy and safe during the school day and the children are taught not to tease him. - If the dog gets loose the teacher on duty or handler will call for assistance or arrange for the dog to be put back on a leash. - There are nominated members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog requiring attention at any time, they are: insert names		
Dog hair causing allergies	Anyone with allergies	Allergic reaction	- The dog breed is known to be hypoallergenic, however parents will still be informed, and staff made aware of any pupils who have a dog allergy. Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies or issues prior to the introduction of the dog to the school. - A list of any children who should not/cannot interact with the dog will be kept on the school recording system (Insert name) - Children will have the choice to interact with the dog if they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out. - Dog will be groomed weekly. - Children will be taught and reminded to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.		
Children getting germs from the dog	Staff Pupils Visitors	Children/adults will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	- Should the dog mess on the school premises a member of staff or the handler will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. All areas where this may occur should be disinfected with an appropriate chemical. The dog will be trained to toilet prior to the visit or in a nearby area that children cannot access. - Poo bags to be carried by adult supervising dog.		

Hazards/Risk (Potential to cause harm & consider how a person may be hurt)	Who is at Risk?	How can the hazards cause harm?	Normal Control Measures	Are Normal Control Measures Y/N/NA	
				In Place	Adequate
			- All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date and the handler will keep a register of this. - Flea treatment is carried out at 6 weekly intervals. - Worming treatment is carried out at 6 monthly intervals. - The dog will not be able to enter the school dining hall at mealtimes; and will never be allowed to enter the kitchen and food prep area.		
School dog biting a child or adult	School	School not adequately covered Claim is made against the school regarding an action/behaviour of the dog	- The school dog has been trained not to bite. - Pupils are shown how to approach the dog - when the dog is approached in the correct way there reduced risk. - The dog has been assessed against the Pets As Therapy Guidelines https://petsastherapy.org/ - Pet Insurance held by owner and certificate on site and renewed annually. - Children and adults do not interact with the school dog without supervision. - All interaction with the school dog is completed in the agreed way. - If the dog does bite a child, the dog is to be taken off site immediately and an investigation carried out by SLT.		

Additional Control Measures <i>(to take account of local/individual circumstances including changes such as working practices, equipment, staffing levels).</i>	Action by Whom <i>(list the name of the person/people who have been designated to conduct actions)</i>	Action by When <i>(set timescales for the completion of the actions – remember to prioritise them)</i>	Action Completed <i>(record the actual date of completion for each action listed)</i>	Residual Risk Rating

RESIDUAL RISK RATING	ACTION REQUIRED
VERY HIGH (VH) Strong likelihood of fatality / serious injury occurring	The activity must not take place at all. You must identify further controls to reduce the risk rating.
HIGH (H) Possibility of fatality/serious injury occurring	You must identify further controls to reduce the risk rating. Seek further advice, e.g. from your H&S Consultant
MEDIUM (M) Possibility of significant injury or over 7 day absence occurring	If it is not possible to lower risk further, you will need to consider the risk against the benefit. Monitor risk assessments at this rating more regularly and closely.
LOW (L) Possibility of minor injury only	No further action required.