



## **Well-being Dog in School Policy**

### **Stoborough CE VA Primary School**

#### **Introduction**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

#### **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

Yes there is. However, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 1).

Dogs in general are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

#### **School Policy**

- The dog will be paid for and owned by Mrs Murray.
- The dog may receive training to become a therapy dog.
- The governors have the right to refuse entry to 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 headteacher has been informed beforehand and has approved this visit.
- The dog is a Cocker Spaniel chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, sheds moderately and is very sociable and friendly.
- The Chair of Governors, Giles Wade, and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Stoborough CE Primary School.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. The risk assessment will be reviewed annually.
- Children, Staff and visitors known to have allergic reactions to dogs may choose not to have physical contact with the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill, he 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 an adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Everyone must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned up immediately by an adult and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be informed that they may choose not to permit their children to have 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 at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the office staff
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the head teacher or deputy headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the head teacher.
- Public liability insurance has been purchased to cover the dog in school.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

The governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.

The Head teacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

## **Reasons to have a dog in school**

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment:

- benefit children's social and emotional development
- have a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties
- improve behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem
- encourage expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- foster a sense of responsibility
- motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- encourage respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers
- teach children to nurture and to have respect for life
- help children build confidence in reading
- reduce children's anxieties if they have a fear of dogs
- improve attendance

## **Examples of how our school dog will support wellbeing:**

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students 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 the dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Wellbeing dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students 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 students they meet

and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

#### **FAQ:**

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

A-The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Murray; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

**Q- Is the dog from a reputable breeder?**

A- Yes. The dog has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

**Q- Will the dog be a distraction?**

A -The dog will be kept in the office areas. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

**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 other schools that successfully have a school dog.

**Q- Who is responsible for training?**

A- Mrs Murray will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as therapy 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, away from the playground. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground and cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Our policy of no other 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 this time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward. The dog will be kept in the admin area/headteacher office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children 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 children have allergies?**

A- Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions.

**Q- A child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

Any access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children 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.