

SIR ALEXANDER FLEMING PRIMARY SCHOOL



School Dog Policy

2021/2022

AIMS:

Children will be able to 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 research has shown that children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Risk Assessment

A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendices). Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present. A letter will be sent to all stakeholders of the school introducing Bella and provide a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. Should any other questions be raised, Mrs Tomlinson or Mrs Pigg will be available to comment.

School Policy:

The dog is owned by Mrs Tomlinson. Bella will attend school alongside Mrs Tomlinson's working hours. She is fully vaccinated. Mrs Tomlinson has private insurance for Bella health and well-being. Bella is also covered through the school's public liability insurance.

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy dog and the Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.
- The dog is a cockapoo, chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children. Cockapoos do not shed hair and therefore their coats are classed as hypoallergenic. They are very sociable and friendly.
- The Chair of Governors, Terry Yarnall and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. Mr Broderick, Risk Assessment Lead has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Headteacher and governing body. This will be reviewed annually.

- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. A list of people allergic will be kept on file. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill she 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.
- 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 Bella is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and 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 Bella on his body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. A specified area within the school grounds has been identified to ensure that the children do not come into contact with faeces.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their pupils access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Head Teacher asap.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog. This includes Mrs Tomlinson, Mrs Pigg and Mrs Moore.
- 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 Mrs Tomlinson.

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 can achieve the following:-

- 1) Improve academic achievement
- 2) Increase literacy skills
- 3) Calming behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 8) Motivate children who are often less attentive

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 students 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 students 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 students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students 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:

Some children find entering the school day a daunting exercise which can lead to refusal to engage for the rest of the day. The dog can help to distract, calm and engage the child thereby motivating them into starting the day positively.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even 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," students find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have student 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 proved that students 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 the students they mix with. Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School intends to train the dog to this level so that pupils will be able to benefit from the type of intervention.

Social Development:

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. The dog can help older pupils communicate, express and show kindness, learn empathy whilst developing their nurturing skills. 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 students 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 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 these 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. Support Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have struggled with friendships, 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 students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Additional information:

11/01/2021 – During the Covid 19 pandemic, School is operating with smaller pupil numbers. This will give Bella some opportunities to have more 1:1 time with a smaller amount of children.

It is important to make sure the responsible adult supervising Bella anti-Bacterial wipe her collar and lead before handing to another bubble.

If there is no confident member of staff available to have full responsibility of Bella (all classes have at least 3 members of staff) then Bella DOES NOT go for the session. Animal welfare in school is extremely important.

Prepared by: Lisa Pigg

Approved by: Katy Tomlinson

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