

School Dog Policy



Approved by:

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Statement of Intent

This policy is about the introduction of a therapy dog into the school environment. The dog will be owned and managed by the Deputy Head Teacher but utilised in school for the benefit of pupils and staff.

Context

At Roe Farm Primary, we are proud to work together to make a difference and believe strongly in building a sense of community. Some members of our community can often struggle in the school environment for a multitude of reasons and we continue to strive to ensure they are supported as much as possible.

Research into dogs in schools has shown many benefits including:

- Learning, including reading and literacy
- Self-esteem and interest for all students, especially for the more vulnerable groups
- Anger management
- Bereavement
- Developing responsibility
- Reducing stress
- Knowledge and understanding of animals
- A feel and sense of community
- Curriculum involvement

Roles

The role of the school dog will be varied and will depend on the current circumstances in school. During its puppy years, the role will be limited as it is learning how to behave and the expectations change in its new capacity from pet to working animal. Its role can be categorised into three stages based on its development.

Stage One

This is the training stage where both the dog and pupils learn what is expected of them. This is about preparing the dog for its fulltime role. This will be completed through short conditioning sessions usually with only one or two pupils at a time. It will involve completing reward based training tasks such as basic commands when other distractions are present and sitting still and calm for short periods of time.

Stage one can only commence when the dog has completed basic obedience in a controlled environment. This stage will last during the puppy years and can only be completed upon successful assessment by an independent animal behaviourist.

Whilst in stage one, strict rules such as remaining on a lead and close supervision at all times must be adhered to. It is not expected that the dog will be in school for long periods.

Stage Two

When the dog has reached adulthood and has successfully passed a behaviour assessment then it will be allowed in school for extended periods of time. This will allow for work with more pupils and a timetable of activities should be devised to get best use.

Quiet/rest time should be incorporated into the timetable.

Activities might include:

- Reading buddy
- Counselling sessions
- Dog agility training
- Animal care training
- Class visits / learning walks

Stage Three

As the dog enters older age then the roles may need to be adapted and the timetable reduced. There will come a time when the dog will no longer be able to attend school and at some point the subject of death will need to be addressed.

Responsibilities

The responsibility of caring for the dog outside of school hours rests with the Deputy Head Teacher and the dog remains the property of the Deputy Head in the event of leaving the establishment.

The Deputy Head Teacher must ensure that all inoculations are complete and that flea/worming and grooming are completed as required. Proof of insurance for veterinary care and liability should also be kept on record with the school Business Manager.

Risk Assessment

A thorough risk assessment must be in place prior to dogs coming on to the school site. This should be reviewed at regular intervals but at least annually. It should be made available on the school website to anyone who wishes to inspect it.

Consent

All parents will be notified of the intent to bring a therapy dog into school and asked to provide details of any allergies or if they wish for their child not to come into contact with the dog. Any pupil directly engaged in regular activities with the dog will be expected to have formal written consent.

Practical Considerations

A cleaning pack containing gloves, bags, wipes and disinfectant will be available from the Site Manager and another stored in the Deputy Head Teacher's classroom.

When the dog is around school, bags should be carried to deal with any defecation.

The dog must remain on a lead when around the school site and a spare lead should be available in case of failure of the original.

A secure quiet area must be available for the dog whenever on the school site.

Toileting should be encouraged at the front of the school site and not on the playing areas.