

East Stour Primary School

School Dog Policy



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East Stour Primary School Dog Policy

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?

Of course there is, though there are a variety of accidents which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed.

Mrs Law attended initial school dog training in October 2019 and has been receiving ongoing assistance dog training through Canine Assisted Learning (CAL) an affiliation of school therapy dogs. The school spent 10 months identifying an appropriate breeder who had previously provided therapy dogs to other schools to ensure the dog had the best chance of being successful. All of Calli's handlers in school will receive appropriate training both practical and theory based.

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The dog will be owned by Mrs Law and all costs incurred will be the responsibility of Mrs Law. The dog is a Labradoodle chosen for its very mild temperament and non-molting coat. Mrs Law will be responsible for Calli's regular visits to the vets, injections and inoculations.

The Board of Governors has agreed that the school can have a dog.

Staff have been informed, through meetings and emails, that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school and a questionnaire will identify and pupils who have allergies or phobias around dogs.

Mrs Law, Head Teacher has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually and shared with governors. This will also be available on the school website.

In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult handler with Calli, will accompany her to the Fire Evacuation point.

Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.

If the dog is unwell she will not be allowed into school.

The dog will be kept on a lead and harness until fully trained when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.

Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students.

Students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.

Students 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. Students should know not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Students should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

The school will provide regular training and information to the school community about how to approach, handle and work with dogs. They will use outside agencies to support with this work including the blue cross and the dogs trust. This information will apply to dogs beyond the school organisation.

If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students, 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 baring 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 feed, or eat close to the dogs.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti bacterial gel or access to a sink with soap and warm water.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult. A designated toilet area will be provided for any working dogs.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Appendix 1.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Behaviour

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

Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive. Part of their transition into school may be to visit the dog.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, With a dog in the classroom, students 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 students 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, may 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 students on a one to 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.

Reading

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 practice 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 students 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 interpersonal skills among the students they mix with. Bullying can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools dogs are making a difference in the

fight against bullies. 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 participation students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%

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