

Crestwood Community School

School Dog Policy

October 2019

To be reviewed October 2020

Introduction

Students 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, students take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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

Yes 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. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see *appendix 3*).

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

School Policy

The dogs will be owned by Julia Hughes (Shakespeare campus dog) and Alison Samways (Cherbourg campus dog).

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog(s).
- Only the school dogs are 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 given prior permission.
- The dogs are Cockapoos, chosen because they are a medium sized intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, which sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.

- Staff, parents and students have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been produced (appendix 3) and this will be reviewed annually.
- The school dogs will be insured for veterinary treatment with a reputable pet insurance company, e.g. PetPlan.
- PetPlan and other similar insurers do not provide cover for public liability within the school, so a separate policy will be arranged for each owner with a company called Pet Business Insurance. This will be reviewed at insurance renewal to ensure best value.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill s/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 a trained adult.
- Students will not be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Students should remain calm around the dog.
- Students should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Students must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog. Everyone must wait until Sherbet and Woody are sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- 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.
- Students should not eat close to the dog.
- Students should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog via an opt out agreement.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher or Head of School asap.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog. This includes Julia Hughes, Alison Samways, and various teachers/members of SLT.
- 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 Julia Hughes, Alison Samways, Krista Dawkins or Alan Hussey.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Headteacher or Head of School.

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, staff, students, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy. The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Appendix 1. 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 school refusing
8. Motivate students 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 students seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance: Case study: Mandy was a student with poor attendance and anxiety. 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 students. Students 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 Students 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, emergent readers. The dogs also provide confidence to Students as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the Students 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.

Social Development: Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. With a dog in school, 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, 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 students' social skills and self-esteem. Support 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.

Appendix 2

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q *Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?* A The legal owners of the dogs will be Julia Hughes and Alison Samways; they will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will pay for the initial cost of the dog and support insurance, flea/worming programmes and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q *Is the dog from a reputable breeder?* Yes. The dogs are a cross breed between a pedigree Cocker Spaniel and a pedigree Poodle, who are both Kennel Club registered. The sire of the dogs (Poodle) is PRA clear and the dogs are from a home where both parents were seen and have been specifically chosen for their temperament.

Q *Will the dog be a distraction?* The Shakespeare dog will be kept in Julia Hughes office. The Cherbourg campus dog will be kept in the main school office area with access to the Business Managers office to ensure the dog has enough rest. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with students who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms where students can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q *Has a risk assessment been undertaken?* 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 and a reputable dog behaviourist. These include Swanmore College, Regents Park Secondary School and Barton Peveril.

Q *Who is responsible for training?* Julia Hughes and Alison Samways will be the legal owners of the dogs 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 a school dog through with advice from the Pets As Therapy charity. Sherbet and Woody will also work towards their PAT assessment at 9 months old.

Q *How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?* In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in designated areas. These are the area to the rear of Tech block on Cherbourg campus and the wooded area near the ATP on Shakespeare campus. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q *How will the dog's welfare be considered?* The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside when students are in lessons. 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 specific times of the school day. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the admin office and Business Manager's and Systems Leader's office and will only have planned and supervised contact with students and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q *How will this be managed where students have allergies?* Students will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for students and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and

we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, they are given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens. The dogs have been specifically chosen due to their non-shedding coat and they are known to be more suitable for people with allergies.

Q *My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?* Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and students do not need to have close contact with Sherbet and Woody. We hope to work closely with parents of students who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.