



School Dog Policy

Reviewed: March 2023 Next review: September 2024



Introduction

Marley is a 2 year old Cockapoo who lives with our Family Support Worker, Jodie Burton.

Marley has a very mild temperament and her non-moulting coat is classed as 'hypoallergenic'. We are aware that some children may be afraid of dogs, however, the children will become used to her as she comes into assemblies and visits classes. Marley underwent training and to ensure that she is well mannered, calm and relaxed in the presence of children, unfamiliar adults and new surroundings.

Marley will be visiting the school to get used to the environment, noise, smells etc. She will be in school 1 day a week and will always be on a lead during the school day, unless she is sleeping in the cabin or the office.

As Marley will be in school under controlled conditions, the 'no dogs on school premises' still applies to other dogs.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Behaviour

Behaviour problems in school can sometimes interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, children were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and children 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 and some children look forward to seeing the dog in school.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children 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. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's self-esteem, builds confidence in communication and socialising, and teaches everyone to nurture, respect and care for another being. Support Dogs can work with children on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those children who are going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help

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

Reading

Reading programmes with dogs can be a positive experience 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. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," children find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have children 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, above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that children 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 children they mix with.

Wider benefits

The impact of a visit lasts beyond the school day with parents reporting that their children are keen to chat about the dog when they get home and are excited for their next visit – fostering positive communication between school staff and families. Having a school dog allows children to enjoy the physical and emotional pleasure of the human/animal bond. It is serotonin boosting and lowers blood pressure, it encourages laughter and feelings of wellbeing. A school dog will help children to learn respect, be less fearful and be safe around animals.

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

This policy shows that we have thought very carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

APPENDIX A – RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard or risk identified	Whom could be affected	What precautions are in place	What other actions will be taken by the school
Animal health, diseases and parasites	Pupils/staff visitors/	Dog to have necessary vaccinations before coming into school Dog to have regular veterinary checks Dog to be bathed regularly Dog to live with family and owner when not in school Dog will not be allowed to come into contact with wild rodents due to possibility of disease transmission Dog will be wormed, vaccinated and kept free of fleas & ticks	
Dog excrement and urine,	As above	Any excrement or urine will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of, both responsibly and hygienically by the owner or responsible adult at the time of the incident. Biodegradable poo bags and gloves will be used by the member of staff walking the dog.	The dog will be exercised in a secure area of the school grounds twice a day, away from the children.
Hygiene/infection	As above	There will be adequate provision for hand washing and children will be asked to wash their hands after any interaction. Younger pupils will be monitored to ensure the handwashing is undertaken. All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered. Dog to be bathed and kept clean and groomed. Dog food/supplies to be stored securely under appropriate conditions.	Hand sanitiser will be kept in the spaces that the dog will spend most of her time.
Allergic reaction to dog	As above	A letter will be sent to parents letting them know there will be a dog on site so they can make school aware if their child has an allergy. If this occurs, we will ensure that child does not come into close contact with the dog. The dog is a cockerpoo, whose non moulting fur is classed as hypoallergenic, meaning there is a very low chance of an allergic reaction to it.	Teachers to be made aware of when the dog may be on the playground areas to ensure that any children with allergies do not encounter the dog by chance.
Animal phobias	As above	Children are encouraged but never forced to take part in animal assisted therapy. Where there are children with phobias, every effort is made to segregate the school dog from those with phobias Outside of therapy sessions/their activities in school, the school dog will be kept either in the cabin or in the school office.	

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Children misbehaving	Pupils, dog and accompanying adult	Children will be told in advance what to expect and how to behave. Staff will be present at all times during these activities Staff are ready to remove children who misbehave or upset the dog.	
Bites, cuts and scratches.	As above	Due to their friendly, loyal nature, intelligence and trainability, cockerpoos make excellent therapy dogs. There will be no unsupervised contact with pupils. Pupils and staff will be made aware of the procedures of meeting and handling the dog. Supervising adult to ensure that the dog is not over petted to avoid any incidents. If dog appears overanxious or over-stimulated, to be removed to peaceful surroundings.	
Noise, barking	Pupils who can't cope with noise – e.g. autistic children	The dog has been chosen for her existing calm demeanour, particularly around children and will have introductory visits to school to acclimatise her.	
Fire drill and evacuation of a dog	Dog locked in building	The dog will never be left unsupervised. The accompanying adult will escort the dog from the premises. If the dog manages to escape from an adult during the evacuation, then the adult must still evacuate immediately and notify staff outside of the dog's absence.	Dog will be under supervision of a member of staff at all times.
A 3 rd party could sue the school for injury caused by the dog		The school will ensure that the animal is covered by insurance, including party liability insurance. The dog will work towards registration as an emotional support / therapy dog, with certification once her training and adolescence are complete.	