



Windhill21

School Therapy Dog Procedure and Rationale



Murphy

Date Agreed	Approved by	Review date
September 2023	Governing Body	September 2026

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a suitable calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a dog we want to encourage those children specifically who are vulnerable, or those who are less confident with reading, to have a friendly audience to look forward to reading as a treat! The breed, Cockapoo, is carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. The dog is well cared for and responsibly owned by a staff member.

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

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

Context:

- The dog will be owned by Mrs George
- Veterinary costs will be paid by the owner, with the exception of non-essential veterinary costs required by the School.
- The dog is a Cockapoo, chosen for its mild temperament and non-molting coat. It is hypoallergenic.
- The Executive Headteacher and Governing Board have agreed that a dog will bring many benefits to Windhill21 School.
- The vast majority of pupils are very keen to have a small dog on site. Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals a care plan will be put in place.
- The risk assessment will be reviewed annually.
- When visitors and pupils arrive at school they will be advised of the presence of a dog.
- The dog will be highly trained as a therapy dog; the cost of training will be borne by the School.

Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- not be allowed in school if unwell;
- be carried or kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or when on a walk during the school day;
- be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times;
- be fully trained to a crate and a mat;
- have had all injections prior to joining Windhill21;
- never be taken off the site by pupils.

Pupils:

- will NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with, the dog;
- will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet him including:
 - always remain calm around the dog;
 - do not make sudden movements, do be gentle;
 - do not stare into the dog's eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat;
 - do not put your face near the dog;
 - always approach the dog standing up;
 - do not disturb the dog when it is eating or sleeping;
 - do not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog.

- will learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that a 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 she should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.
- follow appropriate health and safety principles.

Health and Safety Principles

1. Children will always wash their hands after handling the dog.
2. Any dog poo will be cleaned up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the dog's owner or an appropriate member of staff. Children must never attempt to do this.
3. Should a Muslim pupil be licked by the dog the parents will be informed immediately by telephone and a note sent home with the child at the end of the day.
4. Should a bite (even playful) occur:
 - a) Parents will be contacted immediately.
 - b) The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
 - c) The child/adult will be released for medical attention.
 - d) All relevant staff will be informed.
 - e) A full investigation into the circumstances will be led by the Executive Headteacher or Head of School.
 - f) The suitability of the dog will be reassessed by the Governing Board.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Therapy Dog

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs George who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school will pay for any additional costs that may incur as a result of the dog being in school (for example, additional insurance and high level of training).

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A. Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder who is Kennel Club Assured.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A. The dog will be kept in the office with Mrs Merrill, our pastoral lead. The office is separate from the classrooms/ playground area to ensure it only meets children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will have a strict timetable which the children will be aware of. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who do not have permission for direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in several ways, should they wish to do so.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A. 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. There will be a School Dog Policy, available to view on the website.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A. Mrs George will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for the training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained, and the dog will work towards a PAT PRO (Pets As Therapy) assessment.

Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A. In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted in an area outside the school where children have no access. Thus, there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A. The dog will have outside breaks throughout the day with a longer walk at lunchtime. 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 lunch time. The dog will have a planned timetable and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period and will have unlimited access to water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A. The breed of dog has been chosen for its hypoallergenic properties. If a child is allergic, they do not need to touch the dog which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions however small. We already manage a number of allergies at school, and this will be no different for children 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.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A. Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Q My child must not be licked by the dog because of our religious beliefs. How will the school manage this?

A. The dog will be trained not to lick. However, while they are still a puppy and being trained, we will try hard to ensure that the children do not come into contact with saliva, but if they do, we will contact parents as soon as possible to let them know that their child will need to wash before praying.