

HIGH LITTLETON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL DOG POLICY

APRIL 2018

Introduction

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

Our School Dog will be a highly trained dog with impeccable temperament. The dog will have undergone in-depth positive reinforcement training and will be rigorously assessed (8 assessments in total) to ensure that they are competent and safe to work within the school environment. Training will be carried out by Dogs Helping Kids (DHK).

The School Dog will only become certified once it has completed a one-year DHK puppy training programme as well as a two-year School Dog training programme. The assessments will focus on training, behaviour, welfare and temperament. The School Dog will be further assessed every year, to check its on-going suitability to work within the school.

The owner of the School Dog will be Mr Gareth Griffith.

The role of the School Dog

First 6 months

During this time, the dog will be socialised by Mr Griffith and will learn basic commands through positive reinforcement training. At the same time, Mr Griffith will run an education programme for the duration where which he will teach them how to interact with the school puppy and dogs in general. This will extend to teaching the children how to 'read' the body language of dogs and the golden rules to apply when meeting dogs.

Those children that have been given permission by their parents, may as the dog gets older, have basic interaction with the dog, albeit constantly supervised. This may form part of a reward system, or if an entire class has permission to spend time with the dog, Mr Griffith may visit their classes occasionally.

6 to 12 months

Mr Griffith may run a lunch/break time club where a handful of children will be allowed to walk with him and the dog. He would ensure that all children who would like to do this are given a 'fair' opportunity to do so.

The dog will begin its more intensive training with Mr Griffith. With the aim of hopefully joining the School Dog programme with the charity Dogs Helping Kids. The dog will visit Dogs Helping Kids in Devon to be assessed by Tracey Berridge (dog behaviourist), to assess its suitability for their training programme. The first visit is to look at the temperament of the puppy; the second assessment is to see how training is progressing.

Representatives from Dogs Helping Kids will undertake a welfare assessment of the environment that the dog is in and assess interactions between the dog and pupils.

12 to 24 months

The dog will have to sit and pass an entry test, in order to continue with Dogs Helping Kids. It will also undertake 3 assessments at increasing difficulty. At this point, it will begin interactive work with pupils, listening to readers etc.

24 to 36 months

The dog will undertake a further 3 assessments and will become a certified School Dog.

It will be a requirement that the dog:

- Is regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Is diagnosed and treated by a vet if it is ill.
- Receives regular inoculations.
- Is wormed at intervals recommended by the Vet.
- Has its claws trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches.
- Be exercised before being allowed to work with children.

Management day to day

It will be a requirement of the handler/owner to ensure that:

- The dog is physically fit before visiting the school environment;
- The dog is kept on a lead when moving through the school or school ground during school hours. The dog may be taken off the lead whilst in its penned area and during direct training with the handler;
- They remain with the dog at all times when it is not in its crate, or penned area;
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking;
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not muddy, wet etc.
- Natural relief for the dog is taken in the designated area only, where pupils do not access. Waste will be disposed of by the handler, in bags deposited in a designated bin.

Pupils will:

- Never have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with the dog;
- Directly 'work' or interact with the dog in a group of more than 3 children;
- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog as part of an education programme run by Mr Griffith.

Appropriate behaviours are:

- Always remain calm around the dog.
- Don't make sudden movements and be gentle.
- Always approach the dog standing up.
- Do not approach the dog when it is sleeping or eating.
- Don't put your face near the dog.
- Don't stare into the dog's eyes as this can be interpreted as a threat.
- Do not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog.

Should a bite (even playful) ever occur:

1. Parents or carers will be contacted immediately.
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention.
4. All staff will be informed.
5. The dog will be removed from direct contact with any child pending the outcome of the full investigation and reassessment.
6. A full investigation into the circumstances will be led by the Head Teacher.
7. The suitability of the dog will be re-assessed by the Head Teacher, Governing Body and if appropriate dog behaviourist Tracey Berridge from the Dogs Helping Kids charity, to which the dog will be working towards accreditation with.

Risk Assessments

The correct socialisation of any dog along with careful supervision of the children at all times should prevent injuries from occurring. All DHK School Dogs are highly trained and rigorously assessed and will only become certified if they are gentle and loving with children at all times. DHK carries public liability insurance for the School Dog and its owner. The school will undertake its own risk assessment and a copy both of these documents can be provided on request.

The owner will have been trained to understand basic canine behaviour and how to read canine stress signals. If they see their School Dog becoming stressed, they will immediately remove the dog from the situation.

Welfare

Water will be provided for the School Dog at all times.

Allergies

The school will ensure that they are made aware of any child who is allergic to dogs. To reduce the risk of an allergic reaction, the following must be adhered to:

- All children and adults must wash their hands after spending time with the School Dog.
- The dog will be groomed before entering the school.

No treats should be given to the dog without the express permission of the owner.

The School Dog will be with their owner and on a lead at all times in the school.

It is accepted that interacting with a dog is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent/carer who does not wish their child to interact with the dog is invited to write to inform the Headteacher of their wishes. This risk assessment will be reviewed annually and the school senior leadership team will evaluate the impact of the School Dog on a regular bases.

If the School Dog is poorly, they will not be allowed to work within the school environment until they have been given a clean bill of health.

The School Dog will be toilet trained and will have an established toileting routine. The dog will only use the designated area provided for them, which will be out of bounds for the children.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and Review

The Local Governing Body and the Headteacher will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy. The Governing Body, in consultation with professional advisors, will carry out regular risk assessments, with the object of keeping the school environment safe.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Written: April 2018

Review: April 2020