



Striving for Excellence

SCHOOL DOG POLICY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Introduction and Aims

The leadership of Ryefield Primary School considered the options regarding the possibility of obtaining a dog as a school pet in the academic year 2016-2017. Over a period of time following this discussion, research into a possible source of a suitable puppy led to the final decision by the school's governing body to introduce a dog into Ryefield.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

1. For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
2. For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
3. To have a pet that the children could interact with and also be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

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.

Current research is suggesting that a 'companion' animal in school can make a difference to the well-being of both staff and pupils. With this in mind, Ryefield Primary School has become the daytime home for Pepper, a female Sprocker Spaniel. Research indicates that these types of dogs are well suited to working in an environment with children.



Why do we believe a School Dog is so important?

School dogs are able to provide comfort and affection to individuals in a variety of settings. For some, school can be a stressful setting and this stress can inhibit learning, manifest as unwanted behaviour and create a strain on the resources which can help young people cope with emotions, disorders or relationships. Through providing a comforting presence in the school they can be an inexpensive way to assist students in focussing on their education.

Empirical evidence has shown that school dogs can enhance a child's psychological development, improve social skills and increase self-esteem among other benefits. Dogs can also teach responsibility, compassion and respect for other living things. Dogs in school can be used to calm fears, relieve anxiety and teach skills. Here is a summary of potential benefits adapted from the Australian Companion Animal Council:

- **Physical** – Interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses
- **Social** – A visit with a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, promotes greater self-esteem and well-being and focused interaction with others
- **Cognitive** – Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem solving and game playing
- **Emotional** – A four legged visitor improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts the mood of the school
- **Environmental** – A dog in a work environment decreases the feeling of a sterile environment, de-stresses adults and children alike.

What are the desired goals?

The following is a summary of the desired goals:

- Increased empathy and compassion
- Improved social skills for pupils
- Reduced anxiety levels and help children to decompress after stressful and traumatic circumstances
- Improved attitudes towards school and self
- Improve reading skills, comprehension and literary interest
- Lessen the emotional trauma of a critical incident/event for students , teachers and staff
- Improved school attendance

An impact study will be reported to the school's governing body evaluating the schools current effectiveness on achieving these goals.

What are the Concerns?

Questions and concerns are inevitable when it comes to introducing something new, and perhaps perceived as radical, into school. From consultation and further reading the most frequent risks are:

- Liability
- Supervision
- Allergic Reactions
- Risk of harm – to both adult and animal
- Animal maintenance
- Maintenance costs
- Hygiene Cleanliness
- Phobic students and staff
- Animal Odour

These concerns are addressed in Appendix 1 – The School’s Risk Assessment.

Roles and Responsibilities

Prior to purchasing the puppy, the Head Teacher Mr Tucker, visited the home of the dog’s parents to ensure that the temperament of the parents was suitable for interaction with children. The puppy would live with Mr Tucker in his home and be introduced to the school environment and the children gradually. A veterinarian practice in Amersham, will thoroughly check the puppy for any illnesses and is responsible for his vaccination programme. There are no diseases that could be caught from the puppy as he is kept up to date with immunisations including rabies and his worming treatment is in line with European vet guidelines. Both the school and vets’ surgery keep a register of his annual health check.

To minimise the risk to children in school, animals are not allowed on school premises. The definition of animals includes all pets including insects, fish and birds. The only exceptions to this rule are assistant animals (dogs for the blind etc.) and the animals that have permanent residences on the school grounds.

When guide dogs and school animals are allowed on school premises, the animal’s owner and handlers must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance and that it does not interfere with the school environment. If any parent or pupil object to the animals presence then arrangements must be made to ensure that this animal is kept away from them. If necessary, the animal may need exclusion from specific areas.

It is a requirement of all our residential animals that they are within the following recommended guidelines:

- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Pets that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed in the school premises until their health is restored.
- All animals should have received relevant inoculations.
- All animals should be wormed regularly every six months.
- Claws should be kept trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches.

- Pets should have been exercised before being allowed to work with children.
- All pets should have their coats cleaned regularly.

The dog owner/handler has the responsibility to ensure that:

- Dogs are physically fit before visiting the school environment
- Dogs are kept on a lead throughout the visit/work – except in controlled supervised circumstances.
- They remain with the dog at all times
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not wet, muddy etc.
- Natural relief for dogs is taken into account prior to visiting
- Training classes from a reputable instructor are attended – both at home and at school. Work will also be undertaken to ensure that children know how to approach dogs and how to behave when dogs are around.

Animal Well-being

Mr Tucker, via pet insurance, insures the dog. The certificate is kept in the school office and is renewed annually.

Legal Liability

The school will cover the cost of liability insurance – the likes of which is available via The Kennel Club, or similar organisation.

Financial Issues

The dog is the financial responsibility of Mr Tucker – he is financially responsible for all his care and day to day costs. The dog is the responsibility of Mr Tucker outside of school hours. Training costs will be paid for by the school.

Parental consent

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

Revision History

Date of this revision: 24/01/2020

Date of next revision: 2021

The policy should be reviewed annually (or sooner in the event of revised legislation or guidance)

Revision date	By	Summary of Changes Made
24/01/2020	CT	Updated information in light of Pepper's arrival, e.g. dog breed and name.

Approval

Name	Signature	Title	Date of Issue	Version
				1

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Risk rating	Controls	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children	<i>Child knocked to ground</i>	1	2	2	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises.	
	Child scratched by dog	2	2	4	Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.	
	Child bitten by dog	5	1	5	<p>The dog will always be on a lead when he is out of his pen/ the Head's office, except when he is undergoing structured training with his primary trainer/s.</p> <p>The dog will be trained not to jump up or mouth the children.</p> <p>Children will be taught how to handle themselves around dogs in order to prevent behaviour that might over excite.</p> <p><i>Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to whole school during assemblies, form time and PSHE lessons.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, cross arms)</i></p> <p><i>The dog will undergo formal training from the age of 12 weeks with an experienced local trainer.</i></p> <p><i>Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.</i></p> <p><i>Some children will be involved in both on and off site training (with parental permissions) and along with the schools' primary handlers, continue to reinforce positive training strategies in a controlled area throughout the week.</i></p> <p>The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises.</p> <p><i>The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school classroom environment, this area of training will allow future reading or nurture intervention to involve the school dog in a calming/therapeutic manner.</i></p> <p><i>Risk of scratching and mouthing will reduce and the risk assessment will be review as the dog progresses through his weekly training programme.</i></p> <p><i>ALL staff have been introduced to the dog and the expectations (does and don't) of having a school dog.</i></p>	

					The dog will attend the vets' regularly to make sure his claws are kept short and that he is in good health.	
<i>The dog gets loose from his pen or from his lead.</i>	As above	1	2	2	<p>The dog's pen is big enough for him to be happy and safe during the school day and the children are taught not to tease him.</p> <p>If the dog does get loose from his pen the teacher on duty will call for a designated staff member who will come and put the dog back in his pen.</p> <p>There are four members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if he needs attention at any other time, they are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Tucker (Head Teacher). 2. Mrs Strong (Deputy Head Teacher). 3. Mrs Avery (Family Support Worker) 4. Mrs Hughes (School Operations Officer) 	
Dog hair causing allergies	Children have allergic reactions	1	1	1	<p><i>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept on the school recording system.</i></p> <p><i>Children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</i></p> <p>Children have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.</p>	
<i>Children getting germs from the dog.</i>	<i>Children/ staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs</i>	1	1	1	<p><i>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner.</i></p> <p><i>The dog will be trained to toilet in an area of the school that our pupil's don't have access to on a regular bases, if required the area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant.</i></p> <p><i>All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are up to date. Flea treatment is carried out at 6 weekly intervals.</i></p> <p><i>Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet guidelines, at 6 monthly intervals.</i></p> <p><i>The dog will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen.</i></p>	
<i>Financial cost of the dog's upkeep</i>	<i>School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dog's day to day upkeep or medical bills</i>	1	1	1	<p><i>The dog is the responsibility of Mr Tucker - he is financially responsible for all his care and day to day costs.</i></p> <p><i>The dog is the responsibility of Mr Tucker s outside of school hours.</i></p> <p><i>Training cost will be paid for by the school.</i></p>	
<i>Claim is</i>	<i>School not</i>				<i>The school insures the dog for public liability.</i>	

<i>made against school re: behaviour of the dog.</i>	<i>adequately covered financially</i>		<i>Mr Tucker ensures the dog's welfare is maintained via Pet Plan Insurance. The certificate is kept in school office and is renewed annually in 2021</i>	
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