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**School Dog Policy**

Written June 2024

Review Sept 2025

Signed – Mrs Kat Allen

(Headteacher)

Signed – Mr Frank Walsh

(Chair of Governors)

At Roby Park Primary School we believe all children should receive an education that nurtures, challenges and inspires them built around our school values.

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally whilst increasing their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with pets. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with dogs and puppies. We believe that having a school dog will contribute towards Roby Park’s curriculum and overall well-being of everyone at the school.

**Introduction**

Our school dogs will become members of the school community. They will be supervised by the headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or another nominated member of staff at all times when in contact with children and will be based in the headteacher’s and deputy headteacher’s office. They will be owned by the headteacher and live with her when not at school. The dog has completed initial training with the Hope’s Therapy Dogs but will continue to receive ongoing specific school dog training in school.

The school dogs will continue to be trained and assessed through approved dog trainers and adhere to the guidance set out by Animal Assisted Intervention Standards of Practice. They will have undergone positive, reinforcement training, have an impeccable temperament and rigorously assessed on a regular basis to ensure they are competent and safe to continue working in school.

**Aims and Objectives**

* Contact with the dogs will be of benefit and bring pleasure to children and staff.
* They will encourage the moral, spiritual and personal development of each child.
* Children (& staff) who are upset, vulnerable, bereaved or in need can seek comfort from contact with our dog under the supervision of authorised staff members.
* Children with specific vulnerabilities may benefit from contact with the dog which may have a calming effect on them, improving behaviour and concentration, reducing stress and improving self-esteem, encouraging expression and participation.
* Children (& staff) may share in aspects of ‘ownership’ of our dogs, particularly significant if they don’t/can’t have a dog at home. This will be under the supervision of the authorised staff.
* The dogs presence will foster responsibility and commitment to pet ownership.
* Specified children can participate in training our dogs, recognising the need for patience and perseverance, gentleness and kindness.
* Children (& staff) with a fear of dogs may be helped to overcome this.
* Staff may find contact with our dogs relaxes them and may contribute to relieving stress and promote well-being.
* Children (staff, parents & governors) will develop empathy and appreciate the comfort and value animals can give others.
* The presence of our dogs will encourage calm behaviour and may reduce the incidence of conflict through fostering a greater sense of community.
* Children will recognise that hygiene is an important part of pet management for themselves as well as animals.
* The dogs will enrich our curriculum through the use of our dog as a first-hand experience. Our dog will motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals.
* The dog will encourage a respect and reverence for life in pupils and thereby improve their relationships with other pupils, parents and teachers.
* The dog will teach children to nurture and respect life (and understand death).
* Develop hobbies / interest in animal care.
* Enhance the learning environment, creating a sense of security and family warmth for our children.

**Benefits to having a school dog**

Reading programmes with dogs can support less confident and less able readers. 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. 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,” children find social support and peer interaction.

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 students they mix with.

**Attendance:** Children can be encouraged to improve attendance or punctuality using caring for a dog as an incentive.

**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 children. Those children 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, may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proven that working and playing with a dog improves children’s social skills and self-esteem.

Support dogs can work with children on a one to one basis and will especially help those children who may be going through upsetting/difficult times. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

**Provision/Methods**

* A full risk assessment has been completed before our school dogs can be admitted on site.
* Hope Therapy Dogs provides training to key members of staff. The Hope’s Therapy Dog CPD Certification is a comprehensive course designed to prepare staff and the dogs for safe and effective Animal Assisted Intervention in educational settings. The course covers essential principles, practices, and ethical considerations, including handler roles, canine behaviour, and risk assessment. Through a blend of theory and practice, participants gain the knowledge and skills to implement AAI programs effectively. From fostering positive interactions to managing business aspects, this course empowers staff to enhance student well-being responsibly and effectively
* The dogs are fully insured by the headteacher and the dogs are also covered by the school’s public liability insurance and insurance that covers staff and the dogs together.
* The headteacher is responsible for ensuring the dogs vaccinations are all up to date.
* All children working one on one with the dog will have signed permission from the parent.
* Allergies and fears will be identified of all children in school regardless of whether they will be looking after the dog.
* The owner/authorised staff members may supervise and walk our dog around the playground if joining children at break and lunch times. The dog must remain on a lead and the usual protocol for stroking a dog must apply.
* Children can have closer contact by assisting with training alongside authorised staff outside of normal whole class lessons.
* Our school dogs will be toilet trained with an established toileting routine.
* If the school dogs are poorly, they will not be able to work in school until they have returned to their full health.
* The owner will have an understanding of canine stress signals. If they see their dog showing these signals, they will immediately remove the dog from the situation.
* The dog will be assessed by approved dog trainers. She will receive an annual retest to ensure suitability for working with children.
* Children with a fear of dogs may engage in a programme of contact designed to enable them to overcome their fear, should they express interest to. Nobody will be forced to interact with the school dogs.
* The owner and authorised staff may walk the dog on site.
* All children will learn about good communication, procedures and consistent behaviour around our dog before they have contact with her. This will be regularly emphasised thereafter.
* Children and staff who choose to have no contact can do so.
* Our dog will not be in school when the headteacher is absent.
* When the headteacher leaves the headteacher’s office to go to another area in the school she can remain in the office or the main office, or move with the headteacher if appropriate. If the headteacher is not present, children must not have access to the dog.
* When the headteacher is likely to be engaged in meetings with others for long periods during the day or teaching for a long time, our dog may not come into school.

**Allergies**

* All pupils must either wash their hands or be provided with sanitising gel after touching the school dog.
* The school dog will be washed and groomed regularly to decrease levels of dog allergens and shedding of hair as well as removing saliva from the coat.
* Increase air ventilation with the use of opening of windows.
* Where appropriate individual health care plans will be set up for children with specific allergies to dogs, should they be required.

**Appendix one: Letter**

[**https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FA-YhdwbYQK-6qnJi8ZqdOPFI2oyVTry/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103232283712331583374&rtpof=true&sd=true**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FA-YhdwbYQK-6qnJi8ZqdOPFI2oyVTry/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103232283712331583374&rtpof=true&sd=true)

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**Appendix two: risk assessment**

[**https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ek1isef1JmqQxd7lFojw9ZP5iaRYcQjF/view?usp=sharing**](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ek1isef1JmqQxd7lFojw9ZP5iaRYcQjF/view?usp=sharing)