



Hawthorne Primary & Nursery School School Dog Policy

Introduction

Research shows 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, many children simply take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a 'School Dog', we hope the children at Hawthorne will benefit in a number of specific ways.

As a 'Reading Dog', she will enable those children who are less confident at reading to have a friendly, audience; as a 'Therapy Dog' she may listen to any little worries and will be a soft cushion to sit alongside. She might be taken for walks to calm those pupils who need a bit of space and may be a gentle companion to sooth away any tears. There will, of course, be lots of times when she will simply provide treat time and friendship for those pupils who are always following The Hawthorne Way.

Pixel Wilson is a three year-old cockapoo, carefully selected as a suitable breed for this type of environment and has been brought up in a family with young children. When not in school, she lives with Mrs Wilson as their family pet and is responsibly owned and very well cared for. She receives regular veterinary check-ups and immunisations, and will continue to receive her routine treatments and procedures.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with The Dogs' Trust to gain an insight into the benefits and responsibilities of having a School Dog. A small group of pupils have visited the Loughborough centre and have received training on all aspects of providing a suitable school environment for a dog. All pupils attended an assembly led by staff at the trust which focussed on how dogs may be feeling by their body language. An ongoing programme of study has been planned by The Dogs' Trust and will be delivered by pupils and staff on a regular basis.

Pixel's role in school will be varied. Specific training is available for animals that will be used as personal working or therapy dogs for individual pupils. This may be considered if appropriate at some point in the future.

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

This policy, together with the separate comprehensive risk assessment, shows how we have thought very carefully about school life with a pet dog. With very careful management and constant reassessment, there is a very low risk of harm.

Context

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Wilson (Year 5 teacher)
- Veterinary costs will be paid by the owner. A small amount of funding is available to cover pet insurance and liability insurance.
- The dog is a Cockapoo, chosen for its mild, but playful temperament and non-moulting coat.
- The vast majority of pupils are very keen to have a small dog on site; most parents are delighted.
- Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals, a suitable care plan will be set up.
- The risk assessment (attached) is reviewed annually or immediately if there is urgent cause for concern.
- Visitors and students will be informed of the dog upon arrival.

Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- be kept on a lead when moving around school or on a walk
- be under full supervision of an adult at all times
- be fully trained to a bed and a mat
- have had all required immunisations and treatments prior to joining Hawthorne – and will continue to have the required treatments regularly
- not be allowed in school if unwell

Pupils will:

- be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet/work with her
- always remain calm around the dog
- be gentle and kind – not make sudden movements or try to tease
- always approach the dog standing up
- respect the dog's resting time – not disturb her when sleeping or eating
- eat their own food away from the dog – the dog will not be allowed in the dining hall or when children are having milk and fruit
- learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language.

Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind the 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 be immediately removed from the situation or environment. Pupils and adult will have lots of ongoing education and reminders about the dog's own needs and how she must be treated.

Health and Safety Principles

Children and adults will always wash their hands after handling the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the supervising adult. Children must never attempt to do this and will never be asked.

Should a bite or scratch (even playful) occur:

- The wound will be assessed and treated by a first aid trained member of staff and any appropriate medical attention will be sought
- Parents will be contacted immediately
- The dog will be removed from the situation
- A full investigation into the circumstances will be carried out by the head teacher and passed to governors as necessary
- The suitability of the dog will be re-assessed by governors

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