



Doc. Ref: **BPS Pet Therapy**
Page No.: **1 of 5**
Doc. Date: **Spring Term 2021**

Commercial
Uncontrolled if Printed

Pet Therapy Dog Policy

Written by	Alex Robbins
Verified by	School Development Board
Approved by	School Development Board
Review Date	Spring Term 2022

Berkeley Primary School
Berkeley
Gloucestershire
GL13 9AZ
T:+44 (0) 1453 810254
Email : admin@berkeley.gloucs.sch.uk



This policy applies to the school pastoral support dog and visiting therapy dogs who have been approved by the CABC. The only other dogs permitted onto the school site are disability assistance dogs.

Rationale

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

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. See Appendix 1 for further evidence and case studies.

The pastoral support dog's role at Berkeley Primary School

The dog's role will develop gradually, but it is planned that they will be involved in the following activities:

- Working with children 1-1 in the pastoral support room (The Bubble)
- Working with staff who provide mentoring
- Supervised walks with small groups of children
- Spending time during break times on the playground/school field (always on a lead)
- Spending time hearing children read in the school library (on a lead and supervised by her owner, following Pets as Therapy guidelines).

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

There is always a risk. Like any other situation in a school in which an accident could occur, it is another risk that needs to be managed. The school has carried out a risk assessment which should be read in conjunction with this policy. This will be reviewed annually. There are no diseases associated with the dogs, as owners are responsible for regular vet visits for vaccinations, and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment and grooming. All dogs used in school must be fully insured for working in schools.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children, but for some, it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Parents who do not wish for their children to interact with a therapy dog can opt out of this provision.

BACKGROUND

The first dog we will use for regular pet therapy is owned by Rachel Carrick (parent and pupil support advisor). The dog is a miniature schnauzer cross, who has a calm temperament and is hypoallergenic. The governing body agreed that the school can have a dog in school. Staff members were informed at staff meetings and parents were informed via email and the school's newsletter. Parents were asked to advise the school if children are allergic or scared of dogs. Any subsequent future dogs will be introduced to staff, children and parents (via the newsletter) as and when they are ready to commence regular pet therapy.



All dogs used for regular pet therapy will have a completed assessment by a qualified Companion Animal Behaviour Counsellor who will provide recommendations to the school for their time with the children. Part of any dog's training is to have short, regular visits to the school environment to condition them and assess their suitability for pet therapy within a school. During these visits, we refer to our school risk assessment for dogs in school.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The therapy dog will be based initially in the pastoral support room, but gradually spend more time in other locations. She will have a crate in this room, where she will be able to rest when not interacting with pupils.
 - Her timetable will be managed by Rachel Carrick, who holds the list of children with allergies. This timetable will include clear rest periods away from children.
 - The dog is a hypoallergenic breed and should not produce an allergic reaction. However, staff and visitors known to have allergic reactions to dogs must be informed that if they go near the dog, it is at their own risk. Children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog, unless written consent has been given from parents that they are aware of potential risks.
 - If the dog is ill, she will not come into school.
 - The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or when walking around the school site. She will be under the supervision of an adult at all times.
 - Children will be taught, in class assemblies, about what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. In particular:
 - Children should remain calm around the dog.
 - Children should not make sudden movements, and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
 - Children should not go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating.
 - Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
 - If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated in which case the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
 - Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the 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 be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
 - Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog.
 - Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
 - Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
 - In the event of a fire alarm, if the dog is in the pastoral support room, she will be collected by and taken to the assembly point by Rachel Carrick. If she is in another location, it is the responsibility of the member of staff in charge, to take her to the assembly point.
-



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The financial cost of any pet therapy dog used in school is the responsibility of the owner, which is agreed before they commence visits in school. In the event of a claim being made against any dog, the School Business Manager has ensured the school has purchased adequate insurance. The certificate for which is kept in the SBM's office and renewed annually.

The School Development Board has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to the pastoral/SEND team.

Review Date: This policy will be reviewed in Spring Term 2022

Appendix 1

Reasons to have a dog in school

Emotional Support:

Support Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have been going through difficult times including being bullied, abused or bereaved, or even those who are scared of dogs. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Behaviour support:

Behaviour problems may occur in schools and these can interfere with learning. Some schools use dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Bullying can be a problem in all schools, with pupils anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullying. Researchers report that pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%.

Attendance Case Study:

Mandy was a pupil with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that, if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love, Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

Reading support:

Reading programmes with dogs are very successful for some pupils. 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. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is crucial for struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the pupils they mix with.

Social Development:

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.