



Doc. Ref: **BPS Pet Therapy**  
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Doc. Date: **Autumn Term 2022**

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## **Pet Therapy Dog Policy**

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<b>Verified by</b>	School Development Board
<b>Approved by</b>	School Development Board
<b>Review Date</b>	Autumn 2024

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**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.

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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.
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## **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 Autumn Term 2024

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