Maylandsea Primary School



School Dog Policy (2023-2024)

To be reviewed Autumn Term 2024



Rationale and Aim

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. Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment? Yes, there is. It is a risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out.

2. Policy

• The dog is owned by Mrs James. During the school day Dexter will be based in Mrs James’ office. Students will not be allowed access to him unless it is for a specific pastoral intervention.

• The dog is a Cavapoo. He was chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children. He is very sociable and friendly and he is also a hypo allergenic breed that is well known to be good with families with allergies. He will also have specific puppy training that is helping reach his Kennel Club Good Citizen Award.

 • Staff, parents and children have been informed by newsletter and parentmail that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been produced and this will be reviewed annually.

 • Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school. The school will ensure that the dog is kept separate from these children. (See Risk Assessment).

• If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school.

 • The dog will be kept on a lead when moving around the school site or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.

 • Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

 • Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog. They 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 put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.

• Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.

• Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog. Everyone must wait until Dexter is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him. Hands must be washed after coming in contact with Dexter.

• If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation. Groups of no more than 3-5 at any given time so that he doesn’t feel overwhelmed. Dexter will not go on playground at playtimes.

• Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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 he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment. Children should not eat close to the dog.

• Children should be careful to stroke Dexter on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head. Children will be reminded of this directly before interacting with the dog.

• Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.

• Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

• Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog and will sign permission forms if they wish for this intervention to occur.

• All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher ASAP.

 • The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. A timetable with be provided.

• The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the adult he is with at the time of an evacuation.

• If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Head Teacher.

• The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

• The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

• Teachers, staff, students, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

 • The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school. Please see the following appendices for more information.

APPENDIX 1 BENEFITS OF HAVING A DOG IN SCHOOL

 In summary, having Dexter working and helping in the school environment we would like to achieve the following:

• Improve academic achievement

• Increase literacy skills

• Calming behaviours and positive attachments

• Increase social skills and self-esteem

• Increase confidence

• Teach responsibility and respect to all life

• Help improve attendance

• Motivate children who are often less attentive

COGNITIVE

Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem solving and game playing.

BEHAVIOURAL

Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. We would hope that by having Dexter in school we would see a difference in the behaviour of students in terms of improved attitude toward school and learning, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. If students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, then can hopefully better understand how classmates may feel.

SOCIAL

A dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. After experiencing unconditional love and trust from a dog we would expect to see enhanced relationships with peers and staff. Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student’s social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, teach kindness, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving students in the daily care of school dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

EMOTIONAL

A school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Students would learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships. Students encouraged to gently pat or talk to the dog to teach sensitive touch and to help them to be calm and promotes provides tactile stimulation.

ENVIRONMENTAL

A dog increases the sense of a family environment, being part of something, another purpose for coming to school. Some of these benefits listed above will continue for the young person long after the school day is over. It will hopefully also boost the student’s connection to the school environment.

ACADEMIC

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop their literacy skills and build confidence in reading. 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 practice reading aloud This activity can create a calming effect on the pupil, as well the dog will listen to the pupil read with no judgement or criticism and they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. This in turn creates an environment where a student’s enthusiasm for reading can grow an also develop the confidence to read aloud. Dexter will be able to support reluctant readers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Students will have opportunity to walk the dog on school grounds with supervision from one of the Polly Ross, Jen Hall, Julia Parry or Paula Hudson This would be on a rota basis. This in turn would allow for a potential improvement in student’s attendance as they have a responsibility to the dog.

ATTENDANCE

We would see an improvement in attendance for students given some additional responsibility regarding Dexter. It is also another reason for the pupil to want to come to school.

SPORTING

Dexter will become a school mascot and could attend assemblies that are appropriate for him to be included in. Encouraging movement for some less active children.

TRANSITION

 Dexter will be part of the year4-year 5 transition process. Students who need extra support and visits with regard to the step up would be able to spend time with him to support transition worries, if needed.

REWARD SYSTEM

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students 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, will be rewarded with spending time to interact with Dexter. Walking, grooming, reading with, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It could also be an incentive for positive behaviour or any form of pupil achievement. House points could be given for a variety of things, helping out, effort, could be linked to random acts of kindness, following the school rule, etc. These awards could be ‘from’ the school dog.

OVERCOMING PHOBIAS

There are students who do have dog phobias, a school dog and careful de-sensitisation programme could help to reduce some of these fears.

**Appendix 2**

**School Dog**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs James who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs associated with it; the school budget will remain unaffected.

**Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?**

A. Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder

**Q Will the dog be a distraction?**

A. The dog will be kept in an office area. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dog is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dog are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.

**Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A. Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog. There is also a School Dog Policy and risk assessment available to view on the school website.

**Q Who is responsible for training?**

A. The nominated member of staff will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained.

**Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A. In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted in a sectioned off area of the school site where children have no access. Thus there will be no chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

**Q How will the dog’s welfare be considered?**

A. As the puppy grows he will be walked mornings and lunchtime. The dog will be kept in an Office area and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work closely with other professionals to ensure the dog’s welfare is always carefully considered.

**Q How will this be managed where children have allergies**?

A. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. The breed of dog has also been chosen for its hypoallergenic properties. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies.

**Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have regular, close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.