



Victoria Lane Academy

School Dog Policy

September 2023

School Dog Policy



Name of dog: Fraser

Breed: Cockapoo

Current age: 5 1/2 years old (born 23.10.2017)

Owner: Mrs Dodds (Executive Head Teacher)

Introduction:

Children can benefit in many different ways through having contact and interactions with a dog. Therapy dogs are used to react and respond to people and their environment under the guidance of their owner. Research has shown that having a therapy dog in school can 'help to reduce student anxiety, stress and contributes to good attendance'. They can provide educational and emotional support for pupils and staff and have been proven to have many benefits in the school environment.

These include:

- Teaching empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills
- Develop communication and social skills
- Raise confidence, E.g. 'hearing' children read
- Give children a sense of responsibility
- Provide calm in moments of stress and anxiety
- Increased/improved attendance
- Increased motivation to learn
- Enhanced relationships with peers and staff through the experience of receiving unconditional love from a dog

Are there risks when bringing a dog into the school environment?

There are some risks associated with bringing a dog into school. There are however a number of incidents or injuries that happen in the school environment that far exceed the number that may be caused by a dog. The dog will be just another risk that will be managed carefully to avoid accidents from happening. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out as you will see further on in this document.

This policy outlines the risks managed and the measures put in place to ensure that our school dog can be present. Please note: No other dogs are permitted on the school premises at any time unless authorised by the Head Teacher. E.g. Police dogs. This includes drop off and pick up times.

School Policy:

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Dodds.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs must come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the head teacher has been informed before the visit.
- Fraser is a Cockapoo and has been chosen because of his gentle nature. This breed typically respond well to training whilst being patient and tolerant. They are also a sociable and friendly breed who respond well to children. Cockapoos also do not shed fur and are a hypoallergenic breed.
- The Chair of Governors and CEO of Tudhoe Learning Trust has agreed that they feel the children at our school will benefit from having a school 'listening' dog.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed that a dog will be present in school. All visitors will be informed that we have a school dog and signs will be placed around school on the doors of rooms where Fraser may be.
- Mrs Dodds has produced a risk assessment that will be reviewed annually or where required.
- Staff, visitors and children who are allergic to Fraser must not be in contact with him.
- Fraser has his own space in the school office where he has a bed, toys and access to food and water. This will be Fraser's base in school.
- Children can be invited to visit him in the office and will always be accompanied by an adult
- Fraser will also visit children in their classroom, or may be in the school hall for assembly. This will be managed carefully by an appropriate adult and Fraser will be on a lead at all times.
- If Fraser is ill or is showing signs of tiredness, he will not be brought into school.
- Fraser will be kept on a lead when moving throughout school and when on walks on the school site. He will always be handled by a capable member of staff who is known to him.
- Children will never be left alone with Fraser and will always be supervised, even in open spaces.
- Children will be consistently reminded of what is appropriate behaviour when interacting with Fraser. They must always remain calm and should not make sudden movements or touch him until he is sitting down and only when invited by a staff member to do so.

- Children should not disturb Fraser whilst he is eating or sleeping or when he is having his 'rest time' in his specified room.
- Children must not play roughly with Fraser.
- Fraser will never be surrounded by a large number of people as this could make him nervous or agitated. Adults in charge of a group of children must always manage a situation carefully. No more than 4 children should come to visit Fraser at any one time.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. If Fraser has his tail between his legs, whines, growls or hides behind an object or owner this could mean that he is feeling stressed, anxious or frightened and he will be immediately removed from a situation as these are warning signs that can affect the wellbeing of him or the children.
- Children and staff should not eat around Fraser in his space.
- Children should stroke Fraser on his body, chest and back and should avoid his face/tail.
- Children should always wash their hands/ sanitise after time spent with Fraser.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned up and disposed of immediately. Fraser will be taken for regular walks throughout the school day and also has a designated area of the field away from children, where he can be off his lead and be free to run around.
- All parents have been informed and can contact school about their child having contact with the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival. Signs will be visible on all doors to rooms where Fraser may be.
- Mrs Dodds will know the whereabouts and supervision of Fraser at all times.
- A sign will be placed on Mrs Dodds office door, to let everyone know if Fraser is in school that day.
- Fraser will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Dodds or appointed adult.

Actions:

If a child, parent, member of staff or school governor has an issue with the school dog, this information will be shared with the Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by Mrs Dodds.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.
- Mrs Dodds and Mr Smith (CEO of TLT) are responsible for implementing this policy.
- Teachers, staff, pupils, 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 all unknown dogs outside of school.

- There will be 2 members of staff who may be called upon to attend to a situation. These are: Mrs Dodds (Executive HT and legal owner), Miss Whitfield (Deputy Headteacher).

Reasons to have a dog in school

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in a school environment can achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase Literacy skills
- Calm behaviour
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help improve school attendance
- Help to motivate children who are often less focused

Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference to the behaviour of pupils. Research shows that some students can identify more easily with animals and by showing empathy with a dog, can better understand how their peers feel in certain situations. Behaviour can often interfere with learning and school dogs have been used to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive attitudes instead. Dogs are also used as a motivational tool on a reward basis, helping children to show positive behaviour so that they are able to spend time with the dog. Research has also shown that some pupils' behaviour improved towards teachers and therefore showed more responsibility for their actions. Additionally, some parents have shared that their child seemed more interested in coming to school as a result of having a dog in school.

Fraser is central to our Behaviour policy in school and will be referred to regularly when staff are talking to children about their behaviour.

Attendance:

Research has shown that children who had a dog in school could be persuaded more easily to attend school as they could be given aspects of responsibility towards the dog throughout the day. As a result, attendance for children who regularly missed school improved, with some children's attendance reaching over 95%.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs have shown to have a huge impact on some children. Pupils who might feel embarrassed to read aloud to their teacher or peers are more likely to be less scared when reading to a dog as the dog will not judge or correct them. Dogs can be used to encourage struggling readers to read aloud in the presence of a calm and well-trained dog.

Dogs are incredibly calm and are happy to have people around them. They are content when being read to by students and will join small groups of students for calm activities. Dogs give unconditional love and acceptance which is crucial for struggling readers with low self-confidence. Research has shown that pupils who read to dogs, show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, have an increased motivation to read and write and have improved interpersonal skills among their peers.

Social Development:

Having a dog in school can provide opportunities for improved social development. They are especially useful for teaching children responsibility and social skills. Schools are using dogs to build self-esteem, learn about positive reinforcement, responsibilities and boundaries. Pupils can use dogs to help them communicate, learn kindness and develop ownership.

Children with a dog in school have the opportunity to learn how to care for an animal including walking, grooming and playing. Researchers report that pupils having daily care responsibilities for a dog is a positive experience and can promote their own daily care.

Reward:

Dogs can be gentle, loving and calm but can also be full of fun and energy. Pupils who have performed well, have worked hard or have made great progress in a certain area may be rewarded with time spent with the school dog. This can include walking, grooming, relaxed time, training or play, under the supervision of an adult at all times. This can be a great opportunity to improve self-esteem.

Support dogs can work with children on a 1-1 or small group basis and can be especially beneficial for children experiencing friendship difficulties, phobias or challenging times at home or with their family. A dog can bring such joy to children that they meet and are happy to provide cuddles to those that they spend time with. Dogs can provide reassurance and friendship for children experiencing a range of difficulties.

Frequently asked questions:

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

Mrs Dodds is the legal owner of the dog and she will pay for the costs associated.

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. Fraser is from a registered breeder. He is from a loving home where both parents were seen and documents checked. Fraser has been chosen for his temperament and is from a breed considered to be calm, tolerant and easy to train.

Will the dog be a distraction from learning?

No. Fraser will primarily be kept in his base - the Head Teacher/school office area. This space is separate from the classrooms/playground and small group areas. Fraser will only visit classes for short periods with Mrs Dodds/Miss Whitfield.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and have conducted lots of research over the last 12 months from many sources including other schools who have a dog where the introduction has been successful. Another school in our Trust (Tudhoe Colliery Primary School) has successfully had a school dog for over 3 years.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Dodds is responsible for general and basic training. She will ensure that Fraser attends professional training and socialisation groups. The Good Citizenship dog training Award has been completed by Fraser and Mrs Dodds through an official Kennel Club training provider.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene, Fraser will be taken out on a morning before school and will have the opportunity to have short breaks outside during the day away from break times and lunchtimes. Fraser will be encouraged to toilet within his designated area. Mrs Dodds will clear any dog foul immediately leaving no trace on the ground. The space will be cleaned with disinfectant if necessary.

Does this mean I can bring my dog to school?

Our policy of no dogs on the school playground is still applicable as we are unable to put control measures in place for other dogs whose temperament and behaviour we

are unsure of. We cannot guarantee safety for our children with dogs from families who are not supervised by staff.

How will the dog's wellbeing and welfare be considered?

Fraser will be walked regularly throughout the school day. He will be primarily kept in the school office. We will ensure that Fraser's welfare is always a priority.

How will allergies be managed?

Children will not need to touch the dog which will relieve any possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies in school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always need to be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for allergies. Fraser is a hypoallergenic breed and does not molt.

My child is frightened of dogs, how will you manage this?

Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children will not need to have contact unless they wish to. We hope to work closely with parents of children with a fear of dogs to allow opportunities for them to build up a trusting relationship and eventually alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Policy agreed by Governing Body September 2023

Policy to be reviewed July 2024