

## *“Believe and Succeed”*

### School Dog Risk Assessment – October 2022

#### Introduction

The value of pet ‘therapy’ is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of pupils and young people and lower the rate of anxiety, and linked to that, aggression, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

To minimise the risk to pupils and young people in school, animals are generally not allowed on school premises. The definition of animals includes all pets including insects, fish and birds unless there are special events which have been arranged by school and where parents and carers have been informed. The only other exceptions to this rule are assistant animals (dogs for the blind etc.) and the animals that have permanent residences status on the school grounds, which belong to our canine therapy scheme.

When guide dogs and school dogs are allowed on school premises, the animals’ owners and/or handlers must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance and that it does not interfere with the school environment. If any parent or pupil objects to the animal’s presence, then arrangements must be made to ensure that this animal is kept away from them. If necessary, the animal may need exclusion from specific areas.

It is a requirement of all our canine therapy linked dogs that they are within the following recommended guidelines:

- All dogs to have undergone an observation in situ by a Dog behaviour Specialist to ensure that they are suitable for the environment of a special SEMH school, i.e. each dog does not appear stressed by noise of angry pupils which could lead to unusual and /or aggressive behaviours of the dogs towards pupils/staff
- All staff and pupils to have undertaken dog-communication training focused on teaching staff and students how subtly dogs communicate, and on knowing this skill, minimise risk of stress to the dogs and injury to humans.
- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Pets that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed in the school premises until their health is restored.
- All animals should have received relevant inoculations, wormers and flea treatment.
- Nails should be kept trimmed to reduce risk of injury from scratches.
- All pets should have their coats cleaned regularly.

The school dog owner/handler has the responsibility to ensure that:

- Dogs are physically fit before visiting the school environment.
- Dogs are kept on a lead when necessary.
- They ensure that the dog is handed over to a responsible person when not under their own supervision.
- They ensure that they allow the dog rest periods away from the busy school life.
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking.
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not wet, muddy etc.(unless in Forest School).
- Natural relief for dogs is taken into account prior to visiting and during visiting.
- Faeces need to be **picked up immediately** by the handler and placed in the appropriate bin, (can be put directly within a closed plastic bag in the external bins).

## *“Believe and Succeed”*

### **Background**

The headteacher of New Park considered the options regarding the possibility of obtaining a couple of dogs as school pets in the spring of 2017, following some research into the benefits of canine therapy for pupils and young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. After discussions with staff and pupils, the headteacher was approached by two members of staff who asked her to consider their own dogs as their dogs had already taken part in the Forest School on a number of occasions. The headteacher met with a dog behaviour specialist to further explore options. The Dog Behaviour Specialist thought it would be a preferable option to accept the offer from the staff as the dogs were already house trained and their temperaments known to the owners. A third small dog joined the project in autumn 19 to accommodate the needs of a younger class.

The rationale behind this decision to allow dogs as ‘part of New Park Staff’ was as follows:

- For the school to ‘foster’ two pets that were able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the animals to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
- To have a pet that the pupils and young people could interact with and in particular be of benefit to the pupils’ and young people’s social and emotional wellbeing.

Prior to the dogs being introduced on a semi full time basis, the following arrangements have been made:

- All staff had a training session led by the Dog Behaviour Specialist on ‘safe communication with dogs’ (i.e. how to recognise how dogs communicate with an emphasis on signs of stress to ensure the pupils/young people will not be put at risk
- Pupils and young people have had an assembly on safe behaviour around dogs and how to read signs of how dogs get stressed, with posters on dog stress signs displayed in all classrooms.
- The dogs have been vetted by the Dog Behaviour Specialist regarding their suitability as school dogs.
- School pays for a regular check up by a vet to make sure there are no diseases that could be caught from the dogs as they will be kept up to date with immunisations, and their worming and flea treatments will be in line with vet guidelines. The school will keep a record of annual health checks.
- An annual assembly reminds children of safe behaviour around dogs.

**It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all pupils and young people but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent or carer who does not wish their child to interact with the dogs is invited to write to inform Mrs Bever-Warren of their wishes. This risk assessment will be reviewed annually and the school senior leadership team will evaluate the impact of a school dog on a regular basis.**

## “Believe and Succeed”

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5*	Likelihood 1-5*	Risk Col 3X Col 4	Controls in place	Review date & signed
Dog getting over excited when interacting with pupils.	Pupil knocked to ground	1	1	1	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible person and will not be allowed to freely roam the school premises alone.	Oct 2022
	Pupil scratched by Dog	3	1	1	<p>Pupils are not left with the dog unsupervised.</p> <p>The dog will be on/off lead as appropriate.</p>	
	Pupil bitten by Dog	4	1	1	<p>The dog will be encouraged not to jump up or mouth the pupils.</p> <p>Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to pupils, and often to whole school during assemblies, form time and PSHE lessons.</p> <p>Pupils are regularly reminded what to do to prevent a dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, look away, cross arms)</p> <p>Staff and pupils to, continue to reinforce positive associations and politeness with treats for the dog sitting.</p> <p>The risk assessment will be reviewed throughout the school year.</p> <p>ALL staff have been introduced to the dog and the expectations (dos and don'ts) of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets' appropriately and the dogs' nails will be kept short.</p>	

## *“Believe and Succeed”*

Slips and trips	Staff pupils tripping or falling over dog, dog bowl or dog bed.	1	1	1	<p>No dog toys, leads, etc. left lying about.</p> <p>Water bows placed in corners of rooms and away from where pupils and staff walk past.</p> <p>Dog beds placed in appropriate safe places and staff and students advised to leave dogs alone when on beds.</p> <p>Areas around dog drinking bowls dried regularly to avoid slips.</p>	Oct 2022
-----------------	---	---	---	---	--	----------

## “Believe and Succeed”

Dog hair causing allergies	Pupils have allergic reactions	1	1	1	<p>The chosen dogs are classified as ‘antiallergenic’ breeds (Bichon Frise and Wheaten Terrier), therefore having lower risk of shedding.</p> <p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known dog allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any pupils who should not interact with the dog will be kept on the school recording system</p> <p>Pupils will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p>	Oct 2022
Pupils getting germs from the dog.	Pupils/ staff could contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	1	1	1	<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site, a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. The dog will be trained to toilet in an area of the school that our pupil's don't have access to on a regular basis; if required, the area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant.</p> <p>All immunisations, flea and worming treatment will be kept up to date in accordance with vet recommendations and the Head Teacher is to keep a register of this.</p> <p>Dogs will not go in the school dining hall at meal times, or will not be permitted into the food- preparation area of the kitchen.</p> <p>For breaks and timeouts, dogs to be kept in Mrs McTeigue's &amp; Mrs Brennan's classrooms, the yard, or the workshop to give dog appropriate time-out to de-stress.</p>	Oct 2022
Claim is made against school re: behaviour of the dog.	School not adequately covered financially				<p>School and the dog owners will share insurance payments which will start in September 2017.</p> <p>Dogs to have third party public liability insurance.</p> <p>Both dogs will have a health check each September paid for by the school. (yearly check) Dogs will also be wormed appropriately according to vet guidelines The certificate is kept in school office and is renewed annually in September.</p>	Oct 2022

**KEY:**

1- Low risk

2

3 -Medium risk of injury 4

5-High risk of injury

Policy endorsed by the Governing Body on

## *“Believe and Succeed”*

Financial cost of the dogs' upkeep:

School is unable to afford ongoing cost of the dogs' day to day upkeep or medical bills. The dogs are the responsibility of their owners who are financially responsible for all their care and day to day costs.

Dogs are the full responsibility of their owners outside of school hours.

If needed, training costs involving the pupils will be paid for by the school as part of the 'Canine Therapy programme'. The dogs will be insured by the school and the dog owners and will have third party public liability insurance.

As the dogs will be used for 'therapy' work within the school, the school will accommodate costs towards any necessary training and assessment of the dogs to meet these criteria as well as an annual health checkup.

Along with the dogs' owners named below, the other members of staff who will be called upon as named carers if the dogs need attention and the main carers are unavailable at any any time, these are:

1. Mrs McTeigue
2. Mrs Brennan
3. Ms Wendy Truman
4. Mrs Milligan
5. Catheryne Berry
5. Mrs Bever-Warren

Assessment of Oscar; 3 year old Wheaten Terrier belonging to a staff member for appropriateness in the pet therapy programme by James Carroll MSc - Dog Behaviour Specialist:

Oscar was observed By James Carroll in classroom situations on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017 from 9am until 1pm.

During this time, Oscar demonstrated high contentment to be in the environment with relaxed body communication and showed no stress signals throughout the observation period. He was observed in various class settings with many children of different ages and temperaments and adjusted remarkably with the changing levels of noise and excitement from various and numerous kids. Not only did Oscar visibly enjoy his time there, but all the children seen with Oscar showed respect, compassion and kindness to Oscar even when they were not necessarily being tolerant of each other. It was obvious that Oscar brought an air of calmness to the children, and acted as a conversation starter and focal point of shared affection.

Although Oscar is young and excitable, he settled very quickly in each classroom. He didn't display any signs of suspicion towards any pupils or teachers and enjoyed their interactions with him. He sought out interactions and wasn't just passive in encounters. I would rate Oscar as being high on a dog to human sociability scale, and would advise that he is an ideal dog for the pet therapy job.

Advice I would give that is covered already in the risk-assessment is that kids be reminded to leave Oscar alone when he is on his bed and that also in line with class break times, that Oscar also gets breaks away from the kids so that he's not always on the job.

Allowing the kids to give Oscar a limited amount of treats (tiny pea sized treats) randomly through the day in agreement with Oscar's owner and his dietary requirements will further build positive association for Oscar towards the school environment and the pupils and staff.

## *“Believe and Succeed”*

Assessment of Freddie; 5 year old Bichon Frise belonging to a staff member for appropriateness in the pet therapy programme by James Carroll MSc - Dog Behaviour Specialist:

Freddie was observed By James Carroll in classroom situations on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017 from 9am until 12pm.

Freddie is a happy little dog and he, like Oscar, showed willingness for the job; he approached the pupils freely and sought out their interactions.

He chose to have nap breaks every now and again, taking himself off to his chair, and the only issues I observed throughout, is that sometimes some of the kids were slightly too exuberant with Freddie and because he's smaller than Oscar, it'll hurt him a little more when they rub too hard. He politely tolerated their interactions, showing a little lip licking, but the kids just need a gentle reminder every now and again to give him some peace and to read how he's responding to them.

Freddie also was observed in different classroom situations, and it's clear he knows how to change his behavior to suit the situation, and an example of this is that in his own classroom, he was very interactive and freely moving around, while in another classroom where it wasn't his classroom, he was quieter and lay down more. This is likely because the pupils in the second classroom were a bit older and were less interactive with Freddie, so he responded appropriately leaving them to carry on about their business.

Similar for advice given about Oscar, the advice I would reiterate is that the pupils be reminded to leave Freddie alone more when he is on his bed and that also in line with class break-times, that Freddie also gets breaks away from the pupils, so again that he's not always on the job.

His bed could also be moved to a quieter location, so he's less on show and less obvious to the pupils and this might give him a bit more peace.

And similarly to Oscar, allowing the kids to give Freddie a limited amount of treats (tiny pea sized treats) randomly through the day in agreement with Freddie's owner and his dietary requirements will further build positive association for Freddie towards the school environment and the pupils and staff.