St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

Therapy Dog Policy

**Introduction**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a ‘therapy dog’ that the children could interact with there will be a benefit to the children’s social and emotional development.

Prior to purchasing the dog, his owner Mrs Ali Brocksom, spoke to the breeders and contacted / visited other schools who have therapy dogs.. She visited the home of the breeder to ensure that the temperament of the parents was suitable for interaction with children.

The puppy lives with Mrs Brocksom in her home, at her own expense and is to be introduced to the school environment and the children gradually. A Vets’ practice, local to Mrs Brocksom’s home will thoroughly checked the puppy for any illnesses and is responsible for her vaccination programme. There are no diseases that could be caught from the puppy as she is kept up to date with immunisations, the treatment is in line with European vet guidelines. A register of her annual health check is kept by both Mrs Brocksom and the vets’ surgery.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children, but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. The risk assessment will be reviewed annually and the impact of a school dog will be evaluated by the school Senior Leadership Team.

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

This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

Context

* The dog will be owned by Mrs Brocksom
* Veterinary costs will be covered by the owner
* The dog is a Cavapoo, chosen for their very mild temperament and non-moulting coat.
* The dog is a hypoallergenic dog.
* The risk assessment (attached) will be reviewed annually

Management day-to-day

The dog will:

* Not be allowed in the school if he is unwell
* Be kept on a lead when moving between rooms or on a walk
* Be under full control and supervision of an adult at all times
* Be fully trained to a cage or mat
* Have had all injections

Pupils will:

* Not have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with the dog
* Meet the dog in a group of no more than three children
* Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet him
* Always remain calm
* Be gentle
* Do not put your face near the dogs face
* Do not disturb him if she is eating or sleeping
* Always approach the dog standing up
* Do not feed the dog
* Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry. 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 signs, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

**Health and Safety Principles**

Children will always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of the dog at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this.

Should a bite occur (even playfully):

1. Parents will be contacted immediately
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing
3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention
4. A full investigation will take place
5. The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the Headteacher

This policy is reviewed annually by the LGB, in consultation with the Headteacher.

It was adopted/ratified by or school’s Governing Body on the ………………………………………………