

Tenterfield Nursery School

Having a Dog in School

Policy and Rationale

April 2021

'Pixie'



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.

The breed, Patterpoo, is carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. The dog is well cared for and responsibly owned by Ria Haley. Her name is Pixie!



Reasons to have a dog in school – some anecdotes

- Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read with them or join a group of children whilst they are having a focus session.
- Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgemental
- The dogs also provide confidence to children, they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love.
- Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.
- Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in pupils.

- A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning.
- Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem, learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries.
- With a dog in the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming.
- Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.
- Increasingly in schools, it is becoming recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom.
- Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion.
- Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils.
- Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake.
- It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.
- Dogs can work with pupils on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those pupils who are going through upsetting/difficult times or are even scared of/phobic about dogs.
- The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils with whom they are spending time.
- Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog

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

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

Context:

- The dog will be owned by Miss Haley.
- Veterinary costs will be paid by the owner
- The dog is a Patterpoo, chosen for its mild temperament and low shedding coat.
- The Head Teacher and Governors have agreed that a dog will bring many benefits to Tenterfield School.
- The vast majority of children are very keen to have a small dog on site. Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals a care plan will be put in place.
- The risk assessment (attached) will be reviewed annually.
- When visitors and pupils arrive at school they will be advised of the presence of a dog.
- The dog will be carefully trained and the principles of 'dogs in school' via the School Trust will be adhered to.

Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- not be allowed in school if unwell.
- kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or when on a walk.
- be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times.
- have had all injections prior to joining Tenterfield Nursery School.

Pupils will:

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with, the dog.
- meet the dog in small groups.
- be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet her:
- always remain calm around the dog
- not make sudden movements, do be gentle
- not stare into the dog's eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat
- not put their face near the dog
- always approach the dog standing up
- not disturb the dog when it is eating or sleeping
- not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog.
- learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that a 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 immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.
- follow appropriate health and safety principles

Health and Safety Principles

Children will always wash their hands after handling the dog.

Any dog poo will be cleaned up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the dog's owner or an appropriate member of staff. Children must never attempt to do this.

If we have any Muslim families that have concerns about their child being around our school dog, please speak to Mrs Beare or Miss Haley individually.

Should a bite (even playful) occur:

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. All relevant staff will be informed.
5. A full investigation into the circumstances will be led by the Head Teacher.
6. The suitability of the dog will be reassessed by the Governors.

Frequently Asked Questions

What will the school dog do on a day to day basis?

The dog would be based in the teachers office but will have a timetable of interactions. The dog may visit different groups to share story time, volunteer or help with particular projects, such as learning about caring for animals. We envisage Pixie becoming a fully fledged member of the team!

How do I know that my child will be safe around the dog?

A risk assessment and policy is in place and will be made available. The school has insurance to cover having a dog on the school site. Children will only have contact with the dog when supervised by an adult and with permission from parents. When moving around the school, the dog will always be on the lead.

Children will receive thorough induction sessions to learn how to interact safely with dogs.

Will my child pick up infections from the dog?

The dog will be fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and will be kept away from the school if it is ill. Children will be required to wash their hands after handling the dog. The dog will be supervised by adults and only adults will pick up faeces, no child will pick up dog mess.

What if my child is allergic to dogs or afraid of them?

Parents can request that their child has no contact, or restricted access to the dog in these situations. Please speak to Miss Haley to discuss any concerns.