EASTRY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Pet Policy

June, 2025

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Introduction

At Eastry Church of England Primary School, we aim to provide a nurturing and supportive environment in order for children to thrive. One way of supporting them in this is to have a variety of pets in school to make this a welcoming and calm environment. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a pet.

Rationale for having Pets in School

Research has shown that pets can:

- Increase empathy and responsibility in children
- Teach children how to nurture, care and have respect for all life

Aims

- Improve academic achievement by helping children to concentrate and feel calm at school.
- To provide a safe and secure environment where pupils can develop their Social, Emotional and Communication Skills
- To strengthen pupil's emotional well-being enabling them to access learning more readily
- To help pupils re-establish good relationships with their peers and adults and see school as a place to feel included
- To develop the pupil's sense of self, belonging and trust.
- To see an improvement in behaviour, attainment and attendance of pupils.
- To support children in their academic learning (i.e., reading), if needed.

Impact on the pupils

Research has shown that pets can:

- Decrease isolation and depression in children and adults
- Help people to feel calm
- Develop and improve social skills
- Lower anxiety and decrease agitation
- Reduce loneliness
- Help pupils access school, improving attendance, and leave the school calmly

Guidance and Responsibilities

The Government Guidance for the Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities (updated March 2021), Chapter 8: Pets and Animal Contact states:

Pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment. However, contact with animals can pose a risk of infection including gastro-intestinal infection, fungal infections and parasites. Some people, such as pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system, are at greater risk of developing a severe infection. However, sensible measures can be taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

The following is also suggested from the guidance:

Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Headteacher should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal. There should be a written agreement within the school detailing:

- *the types of animals allowed in the school*
- *how to manage them and permitted behaviour whilst on the premises*
- *where they can go and where they cannot go when in the school*
- *any insurance liability of owners and handlers*

Animals should always be supervised when in contact with the children and those handling animals advised to wash their hands immediately afterwards. Animals should have recommended treatments and immunisations, be regularly groomed (including claws trimmed) and checked for signs of infection. Bedding should be laundered regularly.

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for pets in school. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy. The curriculum will support learning about pets and how best to behave around pets. This will include highlighting that not all pets are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown pets outside school.

Following this guidance, Eastry Church of England Primary School have put the following in place:

- Miss Gillmore will oversee relevant guidance relating to each guinea pig and amend practice in response to changing guidance.

- As the legal owner of Maddie (Cockapoo dog) Mrs Moss will deal with her care and safety within school. (Please see attached Appendix 1 for further details).

- Risk assessments and care sheets will be provided for each different animal in school (2 guinea pigs and 1 Cockapoo dog)

- Miss Gillmore will oversee the guinea pigs' care and safety throughout the school, but day-to-day maintenance and feeding will be shared with others to encourage children to take responsibility for the care of a living being. Support is always available from Miss Gillmore and Mrs Kemp (parent of a child at Eastry and Guinea Pig breeder).

- Miss Gillmore will monitor their health and happiness and remove the guinea pigs from the school to an identified quiet area, if it is needed.

- The health and wellbeing of the animals on our premises is our primary concern.

Health and Safety

- Pupil's parents or carers will be asked to advise in writing the reason why they do not wish their child to have contact with the school pets such as allergies.

- Any allergies are also highlighted during induction, which should alert us to allergies to other pets.

- Staff are encouraged to participate in the care of the school pets although may decline to do so if they wish

- If a pupil or a member of staff are allergic to a school pet, the pet will be moved to another area of the school and interaction discouraged

- If a pupil or a member of staff have a fear of school pet, then support will be provided to overcome the fear.

Evaluation

Formal and informal feedback from staff and pupils is regularly requested, collected and acted upon.

Appendix 1 - School Policy - Dog

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.

- The dog is a Cockapoo (Maddie) chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, which sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.

- The Chair of Governors and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Eastry Church of England Primary School.

- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. Mrs Moss, Head teacher has produced a risk assessment 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.

- If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school.

- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms 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 Maddie is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.

- 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.

- 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.

- Before stroking offer back of hand for Maddie to sniff.

- Children should be careful to stroke Maddie on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.

- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul must be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children's access to the dog.

- 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.

- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Moss.

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

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 Moss; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support in school insurance for public liability

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in the Mrs Moss' office or the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact, under strict supervision.

The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and in the garden where children can interact safely.

The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

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 and a dog behaviourist and trainer.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Mrs Moss will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for it's training. Appropriate professional training was 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 when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. 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 The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the admin area/HT office 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 access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered. The dog will also only be in school some days to allow a period of rest in the dog's home.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, she is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens

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 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. No child will ever be made to interact with Maddie