



Park Community Academy Therapy Dog Policy



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Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with animals. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with dogs and puppies.

Park Community Academy have appointed two therapy dogs Daisy and Molly, to join the school community.



DAISY

Hello, my name is Daisy and I work at Park Community Academy. I was born in Blackpool on 31st December 2020 and have 6 brothers and sisters. I am a Cockerpoo which means my mum is a Cocker Spaniel and my Dad is a Poodle.

When I am not at work I live with Miss Gardiner. We love to go on long walks and also play in my back garden.

I have completed my Bronze, Silver and Gold School therapy Dog training and my trainer, Natasha, still visits me regularly at school to make sure my training is fully up to date.

I love working at Park Community Academy and helping all the pupils and staff to grow, learn and achieve.



MOLLY

Hello, my name is Molly. I am the new sixth form therapy dog and I work at The Oracle.

When I'm not at work I live with Mr Shanagher! I was born on the 9th of November 2022 and I have three brothers.

I'm a Cavapoo F1b which means my dad is miniature Poodle and my mum is a Cavapoo! I'm only young but I love working at The Oracle, helping all the students that learn there.

I will complete my Therapy dog training this year just like Daisy did. I wonder if I will get a badge? Please say hello to me when you see me around the site.

Reasons to have a Dog in School

1. ***Attendance***

Children that are anxious about school can be welcomed at the gate by the dogs and encouraged to attend by using caring for the dogs as an incentive.

2. ***Behaviour***

When problems occur in school, these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students.

Some controlled studies have found that students had fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. These studies showed that students' behaviour improved toward their peers and their teachers and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that their children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

A dog in school can promote a sense of family environment and children can take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog with benefits that continue long after the school day is over.

3. ***Bullying***

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in stopping bullying. Researchers report that students can identify with animals and, with empathy for the dogs, can better understand the feelings of their peers. Caring for a dog can teach compassion and invoke a sense of respect for all living things.

4. ***Cognitive and Reading***

It has been empirically proven that therapy dogs stimulate memory and problem-solving skills. When pupils read to dogs, it can help to improve their reading ability, develop literacy skills and boost confidence through the calming, non-judgemental effect the dogs' presence can have. Pupils' motivation and enjoyment of reading aloud can also improve even when the dog is not present.

Children who feel embarrassed to read aloud to the class or to adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. Dogs are amazing listeners and give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. Some research studies have found that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write and an increase in interpersonal skills among the children they mix with.

5. ***Physical***

Interacting with a dog provides tactile stimulation, gives motivation to walk and move and stimulates the senses. It can even help reduce blood pressure and assist with pain management.

6. ***Reward***

Dogs can be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment. Those pupils who have performed incredibly well, made progress in a certain subject or achieved something new, may be rewarded with spending time with the dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities that pupils might undertake.

7. ***Social Development***

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development and social skills. A therapy dog promotes greater self-esteem and can provide a positive mutual topic for discussion, encouraging responsibility, wellbeing and a focused interaction with others.

Pupils may have the opportunity to learn how to care for the dogs, including walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care.

Guidance

It is important that suitable arrangements are in place for therapy dogs to engage in school life. These arrangements are as follows:

- A risk assessment is in place and is reviewed annually
- A training programme is in place with an approved training provider
- Pupils are made aware of the presence of therapy dogs via an introductory assembly that touches on the behaviour that is expected of them
- Parents are asked to give or deny permission for their child to interact with the therapy dogs during school time
- The dogs wear a collar/harness with an identification tag
- The dogs move about the buildings under the full control and supervision of the handler
- Children are never left alone with the dogs and the dogs remain under the full control and supervision of their handler at all times
- Children and adults must seek permission from the dogs' handler before stroking them
- Children and adults must ensure the dogs have four paws on the floor or are sat down before stroking them
- Children and adults must ask before entering a room where the therapy dogs are
- Children and adults must be quiet, calm and remain seated where possible when they are visited by the therapy dogs
- The dogs must have a quiet space for peace and to sleep
- Children and adults must never put their face near the dogs and must never approach the dogs whilst they are eating or sleeping
- Children and adults should only feed the dogs with dog treats and only as directed by the handler
- Children must not eat in the presence of the dogs
- Children will not be allowed to 'rough' play with the dogs and the dogs will be removed if children are not adhering to behaviour expectations
- When children or adults are displaying visible fear of the dogs, the dogs will be removed from the immediate vicinity
- Children and adults should wash their hands after handling the dog
- Since dogs cannot speak, the only way they can be understood is through their body language. Growling or baring 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. Dogs displaying any of these warning signs should be immediately removed from the environment. Pupils and staff should be aware of these warning signs
- The owner will not bring the dog(s) to school if they are unwell
- The dogs will be toileted away from areas that are accessible by children and dog foul will be immediately cleaned and disposed of properly

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff, pupils and visitors are required to abide by this policy and the relevant risk assessment.

The school insists on the following:

- The owner has full animal health insurance in place
- The owner takes the dogs for regular health checks and inoculations
- The dogs and their owner engage in a full training programme with an approved training provider
- The Health & Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.