

Therapy Dog-Communication

Cross Curricular Learning

PSHE

Linked key skills: Making choices, communication, negotiation, risk taking, safety and knowing myself.

Science

Linked key skills: asking questions, observing, identify and classify, suggesting answers, gather and record.

Careers /Citizenship

Linked key skills: desire and enthusiasm, punctuality, working safely. Time management, identifying and solving problems, communicating effectively, fairness, knowing the rules, community, finance, rights and responsibilities and diversity.

PE

Linked key skills: Balance, Agility, Technique, Co-ordination, Analyse, Tactics and Strategies

RE

Question, Reflection, Discussion, Philosophise, Challenge and Connect.

Context

Grange School and Prospect House both have a Therapy Dog (See attached Risk Assessments) Animals can help people cope with physical health difficulties as well as improving peoples mental health. For children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), animals are known to help them interact socially, reduce sensory issues, and support self regulation.

Students will experience key areas of learning linked to three core themes:

- Health and Well being
- Communication
- Developing Independence.

These core themes will be accessed at different wave levels of support across the school year.

We are confident that the therapy dogs will bring entertainment, joy and educational value.

Key Vocabulary

Concrete

The real life object

Dog

Lead

Walk

Bowl

Food

Treat

Pictorial

Pictures of the word

Symbols that relate to the objects that are used in the concrete section. Symbols can also be linked to sensory story that is used as a starter.

Abstract

The word written and/ or in a different context

Links to Know More modules:

Science—Our Pets

PSHE—Myself and my emotions/Healthy Choices

PE—General Wellbeing



Wave Specific Interventions

Wave One—Whole School

Therapy dogs will be in school and be able to provide wave 1 support to all pupils. Pupils will become comfortable being in a setting where a dog is present. Research shows that there is a strong bond between animals and humans which can be harnessed by pet therapy. Endorphins are released when animals are petted and this can produce a calming effect for the pupil concerned. Therapy dogs will be available to join class sessions where pupils are engaged in an activity such as walking, or being on forest schools, therapy dogs can act as motivation for pupils who find engaging with physical activity difficult. Therapy dogs will be available for pupils to spend time with where there are health and well being difficulties—for example a pupil being upset. Therapy dogs will be around school at transition points and can support pupils who are finding transitions difficult. Therapy dogs will support the development of a calm and anxiety free environment.

Wave Two—Class based

Some pupils or groups of pupil will be identified as benefiting from wave 2 support from the therapy dogs—this would usually take the form of a small group with support from the class team. Pupils taking part in these sessions will become involved in caring for and exercising an animal and will begin to have a more positive view of themselves. Areas of needs could include; lack of engagement in class PE sessions, adverse childhood experiences, school anxiety, medical difficulties around health and fitness or identifies issues with SEMH. Objectives for these sessions could include: Reduction of stress; Increasing balance and coordination, Developing a sense of anatomy, Recognising Bodily functions, Learn and respect social norms and experience the pleasure of a sense of

Wave Three—Individualised

A small number of pupils will be identified as benefiting from wave 3 support from a therapy dog. This would usually be delivered as 1-1 or 2-1 sessions and could involve other professionals such as SaLT or OT or members of the support for learning team. Areas of identified need could include: High levels of adverse childhood experiences, traumatic life events, medical and health conditions, levels of needs which require a multiagency approach such as joint working with CAMHS or children's services. Objectives for these sessions could include: To acquire or exercise the capacity to concentrate, To develop social interaction or team, To support the development of shared and self-regulation,

Suggested Activities

Activity One: VISUAL COMMUNICATION

The objective is to stimulate visual contact to help improve communication. Visual contact helps the dog understand what is being asked of him and this should be backed up with non verbal cues such as signing and hand gestures This should be modelled by staff to ensure this is consistent. Look at the differences between visual and non-visual contact.

Activity Two: FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

The objective is to find 'missing' items belonging to the dog around the classroom/ area. Items should be hidden around the room—e.g. toys or treats. A visual comments board can be used to communicate what is to be found. The aims is to follow simple instructions alongside the dog to help and locate these items. Rewards should be given to the dog upon locating items.

Activity Three: COMMANDS

A simple circuit of known commands for the dog should be set up and these are completed with support from adults to complete at each station. Visual, auditory and non verbal cues should be given and the dog should be rewarded at each station upon completing the command stated.

Activity Four: MUSIC

The objective is to make a simple song by using different animal sounds. The dog should be the central noise to this composition with other phonically based animals added in. Staff should pay particular attention to pitch, volume, speed and dynamics being communicated.

Activity Five: BODY PARTS

The objective is to learn the different parts of the dogs body, to match these to a picture and then correspond these to their own body noting any differences. Students can pet or point to different parts of the body and then match these to a picture or their own body.

Activity Six—READING

It is well documented that some students find it easier reading to animals than people this should be facilitated in a quiet space and progress should be tracked as usual with staff support.

Resources needed/Things to Consider

- Risk Assessment for working with a therapy dog
- Key words and prompt sheet for specific dog
- Dogs Lead
- Treats for dogs
- Poo-bags
- Any equipment specific to intervention (e.g. balls, hoops etc.)
- Hand Sanitiser

What is the benefit?

- Unconditional Love
- Cooperative Play
- Taking Responsibility
- Developing Empathy
- The dog joining in!
- Collective Responsibility
- Student AND staff wellbeing.

Communication

