



Animal Policy

Author	Written / Reviewed	Passed by Governors	Next Review
D HART	Oct 2020		Summer Term 2023

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally from contact with animals, it can help to increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier and calmer. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Rationale

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted to aid in benefitting students' communication, educational and emotional skills, as well as the development of responsibility and empathy.

As well as the additional benefits, students take great enjoyment from interacting with pets on the Shenstone site.

1. Supporting Social Development:

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. With a dog in school, students 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 dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

Melson (2001) declares, animals may give children a calming effect even though animals are not able to understand them. This can give children "the feeling of being heard and being understood" (Friesen, 2010, p. 266).

2. Curriculum

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well training and the caution must be used around unknown dogs outside the school.

The dog will be supporting students with:

- Reading – Students to read to the dog to help build their confidence in reading to someone who is non-judgemental.
- Responsibility and Life Skills – students responsible for walking and feeding the dog to learn the importance of taking responsibility for a living creature.
- Welfare – the dog to be involved with students who may require someone to talk to or stroke/play with when feeling overwhelmed.

- Rewards – to be involved in rewarding students, particularly those who have an interest in dogs and would like to be involved in their care.

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some students. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. “It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won’t judge or correct you.” Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a “calm and well-trained dog,” students find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have student read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the students they mix with.

Risk management of dogs onsite

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.

Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Head teacher should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal.

- **the types of animals allowed in the school** – Authorised dogs from staff after consent obtained by SLT.
- **how to manage them and permitted behaviour whilst on the premise** – outlined in this policy
- **where they can go and where they cannot go when in the school** – only to be in school building on lead. To also not go out when children on break or lunch as can cause excitability for some children.
- **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.

Complaints and Allegations

Shenstone has completed a thorough risk assessment to allow for the dog to be present on the site. The risk assessment will be reviewed and updated annually unless required earlier than the review date.

If anyone reports having an issue with the dog, they will be asked to raise their concerns in writing and this will be responded in line with our complaints procedure.

Should anyone get hurt by the dog:

- Parents will be informed immediately (if student).
- First aid will be administered and an incident form will be completed.
- Employee or students will be released for medical attention (if required).
- A full investigation of circumstances will be undertaken. The dog will not be permitted on site until the investigation is complete.
- The suitability of the dog will be reassessed by the academy once the investigation has been completed.

Should the dog get hurt by someone:

- Owner will be informed immediately
- Owner will visit a registered vet if deemed necessary and an incident form will be completed
- A full investigation of circumstances will be undertaken.
- The access of the person responsible for injuring the dog will be reassessed by Shenstone once the investigation has been completed

Contingency

If the dog escapes from Shenstone, is loose on the academy grounds, and will not return, the following process needs to be followed:

- Owner will be informed immediately
- Owner and other identified handlers/staff members will be asked to secure exits to prevent the dog from leaving the grounds
- Students will be informed not to approach the dog and not to chase the dog
- Owner will secure dog with lead using training commands
- The dog will be required to wear a collar with a tag at all times stipulating his name and the contact numbers of the academy and owner

If the dog escapes from the Shenstone grounds the following process needs to be followed

- Owner will be informed immediately
- Owner and other identified handler's/staff members will be asked to search the surrounding area
- Students will be informed not to approach the dog and not to chase the dog
- If found, owner will secure dog with lead using training commands
- If not found the missing dog will be reported to the correct outside agencies e.g. dog warden The dog will be required to wear a collar with a tag at all times stipulating his name and the contact numbers of the academy and owner.

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In case of an emergency evacuation/fire drill the following process needs to be followed:

- The appropriate adult will walk the dog on a lead to the assembly post
- The dog will be passed to the owner who will stand at the middle gates with the dog
- The dog will remain with the owner on the gates until the building is deemed safe and all
- students have re-entered classrooms.
- If the owner is not on site when there is an evacuation, then another member of staff will be
- responsible for the ownership of the dog during this time

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Head teacher 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 dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.