

School Wellbeing Dog Policy



Introduction

April 2024

Children and adults can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through regular contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children and adults take great enjoyment from interactions with animals and in addition, they have a calming effect. Our school dog is well looked after, loved and responsibly owned, living with a member of our staff. As a school, we have thought very

carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is very low risk of harm. In addition, the benefits of having a school dog are great.

The benefits of a school dog

- A calming effect on pupils;
- Improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem;
- Encouraging expression, participation and confidence for all children;
- Fostering a sense of responsibility;
- Motivating pupils to think and to learn;
- Developing an enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals;
- Encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers;
- Fostering a nurturing approach;
- Respecting living things;
- Helping work undertaken with the most vulnerable children;
- Helping to support and build confidence in reading;
- Improving attendance;
- Helping overcome a fear of dogs;
- Increasing staff morale and wellbeing;
- Developing the understanding of unconditional love;
- Supporting with the development of cooperative play;
- Supporting children to develop empathy and kindness;
- Will support and promote wellbeing for pupils.

Principles

1. The school Governors are supportive of our school dog regularly visiting the school. The Chair of Governors, Mark Riley is in agreement with this.
2. A detailed risk assessment has been developed and agreed upon by the Governors.
3. The only dog allowed on the premises is the agreed school dog, Bella. All other dogs must not come on site unless the Head Teacher has approved their presence prior to a visit.
4. Bella is a two year old collie cross who is excellent with both adults and children and is toilet trained and well behaved. She has a gentle and loving nature and enjoys being around children.
5. Bella's legal owner is Mrs L Robinson. Mrs Robinson has full responsibility for the welfare of the dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses ensuring that the dog is fully vaccinated and up to date with worming and flea treatments.
6. Bella the dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under supervision of Mrs Robinson.
7. The school's insurance covers the school for risk related to a dog being on site.
8. Staff, parents and pupils will be informed that a dog will be in school and when it is due to visit.
9. Parents may notify the school if they don't want their child to come into contact with the dog by contacting the office by email: clerk.greenmeadowprimary@torfaen.gov.uk or by telephoning 01633 484320.
10. Visitors to the school will be alerted to the presence of the dog on site.
11. Bella will be allowed to toilet in a designated area where children do not have access.

Day to Day Management

In order to ensure safety, we will:

Identify if the dog is unwell and ensure she does not enter school grounds until she is better.

Always keep Bella on a lead when moving around the school or walking around with her.

Be sure that the dog is under the control and supervision of a responsible adult at all times.

Keep the dog in the school office where it is calm and comfortable when she is not working.

Ensure that the dog has all necessary health checks and remains up to date with flea, worming and vaccination treatments.

Ensure that staff and children who have allergies to dogs do not go near to the dog.

Make sure that staff and children are happy to proceed with introductions before any meetings or contact is made.

Remind children to remain calm and gentle with the dog at all times.

Provide a designated toileting area for Bella.

Ask for written consent from parents' in order for their child to interact with the dog.

Our children will:

Never been given sole responsibility for, or ever be left alone with the dog.

Only have contact with the dog in small supervised groups.

Reiterate what is meant by appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they are in contact with her:

- Always remain calm
- Be gentle
- Never put your face next to the dog's
- Do not approach the dog when she is sleeping or eating
- Approach the dog calmly and in an upright position
- Never feed the dog, unless instructed this is allowed by an adult

Further Reading**The Dogs Trust – School Dogs**

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/factsheets-downloads/school%20dogs.pdf>

The Kennel Club – Bark and Read

<https://www.kenneclub.org.uk/barkandread>

BBC News – 'Every school needs a dog as a stress-buster'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600>

