



The Willows School

Therapy / Reading Dog Policy

Adopted: November 2021

Review date: November 2024

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having Freddie we can encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident to have a friendly audience and look forward to working with Freddie. The breed of Springador is carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. Freddie is well cared for and responsibly owned by Chris Cartwright, HLTA.



Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

Context

- Freddie will be owned by Mr Cartwright
- Veterinary costs will be covered by the owner
- Freddie is a Springador, chosen for his very mild temperament and low shedding coat.
- The risk assessment (attached) will be reviewed annually
- Visitors and new pupils will be informed of the dog on arrival

Management day-to-day.

Freddie will:

- Not be allowed in school if he is unwell
- Be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk
- Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times

- Be fully trained to a cage or mat
- Have had all injections prior to joining The Willows School

Pupils will:

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Freddie
- Be reminded of the following things:
 - Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Freddie every time they meet him
 - Always remain calm
 - Be gentle
 - Do not put your face near Freddie's
 - Do not disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping
 - Always approach Freddie standing up
 - Do not feed the dog
 - Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry. 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 Freddie is displaying any of these signs, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

Health and Safety Principles

Children will always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the dog.

Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of Freddie at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this.

Should a bite occur (even playfully):

1. Parents will be contacted immediately
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing
3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention
4. All staff will be informed
5. A full investigation will take place
6. The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the Head Teacher.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head, in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

Signature of the Chair of Governors

Signature of the Head Teacher

Signature of dog owner



The Willows School

Risk Assessment

Activity – Dog on School Premises

Hazard & risk	Who could be harmed	What precautions are in place?	What else can we do
Animal Health, diseases and parasites	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Dog to have necessary vaccinations before coming into school Dog to have regular veterinary checks Dog to be bathed weekly Dog to live with family and owner when not in school Dog will not be allowed to come into contact with wild rodents due to possibility of disease transmission	
Dog excrement & urine - illness and falls/slips	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Dog will be wormed. Dog will be vaccinated and kept free of fleas, ticks. Any excrement or urine will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of responsibly and hygienically by the owner or adult with responsibility at the time of the incident Hand washing facilities close to where the dog will be. A bag containing poo bags/plastic bags, kitchen roll and rubber gloves will be carried by the member of the staff walking the dog.	Dog will be exercised out of school twice a day.
Hygiene/Infection	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Adequate provision for hand washing Do not allow children to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are washed Younger pupils should be seen washing their hands All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered Soiled bedding/puppy pads disposed of in sealed plastic bags with normal refuse Food stuff stored carefully to prevent contamination and infestation Dog to be bathed weekly	Hand sanitiser will be kept in the spaces the dog will spend most of his time.

Allergic reaction to dog	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	A post will be placed on the website letting parents know there will be a dog on site so if they have a child who is allergic to let the school know. If this occurs we will ensure that the child does not come into close contact with the dog. Dog kept clean and groomed. Dog is a Springador which is a low moulting dog so this mean there is a very low chance of an allergic reaction to it. Dog bed kept in the horticulture area where flow of children is minimal and controlled. Rooms kept well ventilated. Dog bed and blankets to be kept clean and to a high standard. First Aid kit kept in the office.	Teachers to be made aware of when the dog may be in the playground areas to ensure that children with allergies do not encounter the dog by chance.
Bites, cuts and scratches	Pupils/Staff/Visitors	Springadors are bred to be sociable dogs and are often used as therapy dogs as they are known to be good with children. Staff/children known to have allergies/ phobias have restricted access to suit their needs. There will be no unsupervised contact with pupils. Dog closely supervised and kept under control in the main office. Pupils and staff will be made aware of the procedures of meeting and handling the dog. First Aid kit in the office. Supervising adult to ensure dog not over petted to avoid any incidents. If dog appears anxious or over-stimulated, to be removed to peaceful surroundings	
Noise, barking	Pupils who can't cope with noise – e.g. autistic children	Springadors are bred to be sociable dogs and are often used as therapy dogs as they are known to be good with children. The dog is being introduced to the children from an early age so will be acclimatized to a noisy environment and therefore reduce the chance of it barking.	
Fire drill & evacuation of dog	Dog – locked in building	Areas that the dog may be in are accessible by several members of staff.	Dog will be under supervision of a member of staff at all times.
A third party could sue the school for injury caused by the dog		The school will ensure that the animal is covered under their insurance policy and take out comprehensive additional insurance including party liability insurance.	

Reasons to have a dog in school

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 a teacher or a peer, after all, a dog won't correct you. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice 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 students 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 readers. The dog also provides confidence 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.

Social Development: Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility.