

Northampton International Academy

Therapy

Dogs

On site

2022/2024

‘Every child deserves to be the best they can be’

Scope: East Midlands Academy Trust & Academies within the Trust	
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Owner: East Midlands Academy Trust Board of Trustees	Union Status: Not Applicable
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Non Statutory	New policy – version 1

Revision Date	Revisor	Description of Revision

Therapy Dogs Policy

Introduction:

A variety of animals, including dogs, are becoming an ever-popular and worthwhile addition to schools across the country. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. At NIA we value the development of children's well-being along with their spiritual, moral and social education as highly as we value academia. We believe a school dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills and well-being.

NIA is working in partnership with Lincolnshire University as part of their Pets as Therapy research project.

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

There are risks associated with bringing a dog into a school environment; though there are a variety of accidents which can happen within school which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a trained, accompanied dog. Therefore, it is another risk that can to be managed.

Reasons to have a dog in school:

There are numerous benefits to having a dog in school:

- A school dog enables children to put our school values into practice: from friendship to patience, respect, love and happiness; our values can be developed through and alongside a dog.
- Children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school dog.
- With the UK dog population reaching 8.5 million, children and adults are bound to come in to contact with dogs at various points in their lives. Children without pet dogs have the opportunity to learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with dogs when they are out and about.
- With a dog to care for, children are more mindful of their behaviour. Incidents of running in corridors and shouting unnecessarily are reduced; they are generally more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices.
- One of school priorities is to help children to develop a growth mindset: to be resilient learners who aren't afraid to make mistakes and persevere to acquire new skills. A dog is an excellent role model for this as training dogs takes time and repetition.
- Reading programmes with dogs are very valuable 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. . Dogs can be used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud and reluctant writers to read aloud what they have written.
- With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students find social support and peer interaction.

- Dogs provide confidence to children as they make good listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who are feeling vulnerable, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. A dog can bring joy and are happy to provide plenty of reassurance to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.
- Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching social skills and responsibility. Students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Schools can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students.
- With a dog in the school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal.
- Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of school 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.
- As a reward: Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog.
- Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.
- Having a dog on site provides an opportunity to overcome a fear of animals
- Dogs can be a great way for to help students to interact with members of the wider community. For example, students may take the dog to visit other schools, hospitals or care homes and help others to benefit from this therapeutic support.

School Policy:

- This policy applies to the regulated school dogs only. It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property. No other dogs, except service dogs and police dogs, are allowed on the premises.
- The dogs are owned by staff members. All costs pertaining to their care are met by the owners.
- Parents/Carers will have access to the school dog policy and associated risk assessment on the website.
- Parents/carers have the right to withhold consent for their child to have any direct contact with the dog. Any such wishes will be respected and upheld by the school.
- Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs should not go near the dog.
- Anyone with a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with the dog.
- They can receive coaching in a controlled environment with the dog to help them overcome their fears if they so wish.
- The dog's health and well-being are prioritised along with that of the children and staff.
- The dog will be insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be up-to date.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- The dog will not be allowed to enter the school kitchen or go into the hall during meal times.
- The dog will be trained to use a designated, external toileting area that is out-of-bounds to

the children. If any 'accidents' occur in areas where children have access to, appropriate

measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.

- Children will never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with pupils.
- Notices will be displayed to inform children, staff and visitors of the dog's presence.
- Students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Students should remain calm around the dog.
- Students should speak to the dog's handler first and ask permission to approach the dog.
- Students must not encourage the dog to jump up – four paws must stay on the floor at all times.
- Students should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
- Students should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Students should never go near or disturb the dog when s/he is sleeping or eating.
- Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- Students should take it in turns to pet the dog.
- Students should not feed or eat close to the dog.
- Students should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- The adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation when a student is with the dog.
- There is an emergency evacuation procedure in place for the dogs.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy and risk assessment for dogs in school.
- The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to the Deputy Head.
- The dog's handler is responsible for the welfare of their dog.
- Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.
- The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.
- Following recommendations from Pets as Therapy, the school dog's contact working ours should not exceed 2 hours in one day. It is the owners and handlers responsibility to monitor the schedule in order to follow this guideline.