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School Dog Policy

and FAQs

Aims

This document provides information and clear guidance about our school dog. 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. With the proper training and supervision, a dog can enrich a child's life.

Introduction

Our school dog 'Sizzles' live with and is owned by the headteacher and his family. He is a wire-haired Dachshund and has been chosen especially because of his great temperament.

Like so many other smaller dogs dachshunds make ideal therapy dogs. They are also active, fun-loving and love being around people.

Sizzles has public liability insurance through DESC. He regularly visits the vet for check-ups has his health and weight monitored and is given worm and flea treatments when appropriate.

General Information

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the headteacher has been informed before hand.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- 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 appropriate adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times. If any child finds themselves alone with Sizzles, they should inform an adult immediately.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog while it is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.

Guidance for interaction with the dog

- Everyone must wait until Sizzles is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. 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 the dog is displaying any of these warning signs he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- No-one should eat close to the dog or give him their food.

- Sizzles should only be stroked on his body, chest, back and not by his face or on top of his head.
- Sizzles should **not** be picked up by anyone who is not trained to do this safely. Dachshunds' backs are easily damaged.
- Sizzles is **not allowed** to climb or climb stairs as this can damage his back.
- Everyone must wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the headteacher or other designated adult.
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the headteacher or deputy headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the headteacher.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The headteacher 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 around school.
- The school's governing body and DESC Health and Safety Adviser agree and review the School Dog Risk Assessment and have confirmed that public liability insurance is provided by DESC for the school dog.

Risk

There are risks involved in bringing a dog in the school environment although there are already a variety of accidents, which could happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Having a dog in school is therefore just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and is included in this document.

(Appendix A)

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following;

- Improve academic performance;
- Increase literacy skills;
- Promote calming behaviours;
- increase social skills and self-esteem;
- increase confidence;
- teach responsibility and respect for all life;
- help prevent school avoidance;
- motivate children who are often less attentive.

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school.

Education

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. 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. Some pupils find social support and peer interaction when reading to the school dog which helps them practising to read aloud. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or in a group of children whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgemental, which is especially crucial to struggling and emergent readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they are amazing listeners, providing children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils 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 pupils with whom they mix.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries. Others use dogs to help communication, teach kindness, and empower pupils.

With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils and staff. Those pupils who have shown a growth mindset or met challenge and faced failure during the week or those who have made good progress and have made an effort to learn well may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the school dog.

Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proven that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Dogs can also work with pupils to help those children who are going through upsetting/difficult times and even those who are scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Behaviour

Researchers report that pupils can identify with animals, and with empathy for a dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. In some schools, dogs are actively used to promote positive behaviour and researchers also found that pupils' behaviour improved towards teachers. Children also showed more confidence and responsibility whilst parents reported that children seemed more interested in school when there was a school dog.

Frequently asked questions

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs.

A Mr Ayres is the legal owner of the dog; he will bear all the costs associated with owning the dog; the DESC provides public liability insurance.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes the dog is from Fay Hutchings (collidach.co.uk). She is also a show judge and her dogs have won numerous awards including 1st Limit Bitch & Reserve Challenge Certificate at Crufts 2019. Sizzles is registered with the kennel club and is a member of the Dachshund UK club.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in the headteachers' office when in school. (Usually Tuesday to Thursday) The office is separate to the classroom and any communal or play areas and staff will ensure that the dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have permission. All contact with children is under adult supervision. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and have sought advice from a range of sources. The risk assessment has been agreed by the DESC and the school governors.

Q. Who is responsible for training?

A. Mr Ayres is responsible for the dog's training and will obtain professional advice from appropriate sources in order to make sure that the dog is trained to behave well within the school environment.

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A In the interests of hygiene, our dog will be toileted when take for short walks offsite. Any 'accidents' will be cleared appropriately leaving no trace on the ground and the area cleaned with disinfectant if needed.

Our policy of no dogs anywhere in the school grounds (unless by prior agreement of the headteacher for educational purposes) is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place to guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to walk the dog when supervised by a member of staff during this time. The dog will be kept in the headteacher's office with appropriate access to food and water. All staff will work carefully to ensure that the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will the dog be managed where children have allergies?

A Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. A range of allergies are already managed by the school and this will be no different to children who are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. Wire-haired Dachshunds are known to moult less than other dogs and appropriate grooming will be carried out at regular intervals.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised. Children do not need to have a close contact with the dog if this wish has been communicated by parents both to us and to their child. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs and teach them how to manage this positively.

J.Ayres May 2020