



Therapy Dogs Policy

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| Name of School | Petersgate Infant School |
| Date of review | September 2023 |
| Date of next review | September 2024 |
| Reviewed by | Wendy Mitchell Headteacher |

School Vision

"for all children to grow into responsible, caring individuals who actively and positively contribute to the community."

At Petersgate Infant School, our vision outlined above is strengthened by our values of safety, caring, achievement, resilience and friendship. These values symbolise warmth, community and cohesion to ensure we are "working together to achieve our best".

As a school, we can apply these values through the following aims:

Aims

- Ensuring everyone stays healthy and safe.
- Ensuring everyone feels valued and has a sense of belonging.
- Providing a high quality learning environment.
- Helping everyone enjoy learning and achieving their best.
- Nurturing and developing the whole child.
- Ensuring everyone makes a positive contribution to the school and wider community.

Safeguarding at Petersgate Infant School is carried out in line with the statutory guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' published by the Department for Education.

1. General

Petersgate Infant School recognises that there are educational benefits (both academic and emotional) of using dogs in the classroom. Petersgate works to the standard Hampshire policy, which does not allow dogs (except guide dogs) onto the school premises, and this is still in place. However, the school does make exceptions for named therapy dogs. Permission is required from the Head teacher and the Governors of the school before dogs are brought into classrooms. It is the Head teacher's responsibility to ensure there is appropriate educational purpose when the dogs are housed in our classrooms. Dogs will not be transported on school buses although may take part in local school trips if appropriate.

Our school cares for, uses dogs, and therefore will ensure that we afford them the following:

- Sufficient space for the normal behaviour and postural requirements of the species
- Proper ventilation, lighting and temperature control
- Clean drinking water
- A clean bed (regularly maintained and cleaned)
- A quiet area to go to where undue stress and disturbance are minimised (ELSA room or office or boot of owner's car if weather permitting and for short time periods)

In the event of a fire or critical incident, the dog would leave the building with the owner.

2. Therapy Dogs

Petersgate Infant School supports the use of dogs for the academic, social and emotional benefits they can bring to our children. They will be used in a variety of situations as discussed and agreed between the teacher and the dog owner. An example of the activities may include:

- Taking part in guided reading work
- Supporting/motivating children during 1:1 sessions
- Providing comfort to a distressed child (fallen over at playtime, argument with friend etc.)
- Accompanying children to see visitors that they may find stressful (police, social workers, school nurse)
- Accompanying children outside if they cannot take part in PE e.g. children with a broken arm can still walk the dog!
- A fun friend to play with (especially if they do not have a pet at home)!
- Listening to readers or listening to stories children have written.
- A role model: sits quietly on the carpet, listens carefully, gentle and kind to everyone, eats healthy snacks, takes regular exercise, drinks water, waits their turn, shares.
- Providing opportunities for children to be responsible.
- A reward for good behavior/effort.
- Accompanying children to the library
- As part of the ELSA team supporting work on for social skills and self-esteem or as the ultimate confidential friend (he won't share your secrets)!
- and so the list goes on, we can always rely on our teaching staff to use opportunities creatively.

Our dogs provide affection and comfort to children throughout the school. Our dogs are chosen because of their temperament. They are friendly, patient, confident, at ease in all situations and gentle. They enjoy human contact and are content to be patted and handled, sometimes clumsily. The dog's main job at school is to allow unfamiliar people to make physical contact with it and enjoy that contact.

The dogs are introduced to children gently and slowly and all children are taught how to handle and look after the dogs properly.

3. Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment has been undertaken and is available for anybody to view in the school office. The following minimum standards shall be in effect for dogs approved to be working in school.

- The dog will be clean, well-groomed and not smell offensive.
- The dog will be toileted in a specific area (not used for children – the far side of the car park) at the discretion of the owner and any resulting mess cleared up straight away.
- The dog will not annoy people or seek attention.
- The dog will not vocalise unnecessarily.
- The dog will not show aggression towards people or animals.
- The dog will not solicit or steal food (food will be stored appropriately in the classroom area).
- The dog will not pose a threat to children or school personnel.

The dogs are owned by school staff and must meet the standards of health as prescribed by their vet at the owner's expense. The school bears no financial responsibility for the care or feeding of the animal.

The owner will provide:

- Proof of current vaccinations and the annual health document from a registered vet
- A visually clean dog with no evidence of ticks and fleas
- A visually healthy, alert and not grossly overweight/underweight dog

These requirements will be met on an annual basis, prior to the start of the school year. The Head teacher shall notify parents on an annual basis regarding the use of therapy dogs in our building.