

Charlie's (Therapy Dog) Policy

Date	Review Date	Endorsed by	Approved by	Link Governor
Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Curriculum and Community Committee	Governing Body	Steven Lock

Introduction

There is a considerable body of evidence that suggests that simply being with animals has a therapeutic effect, and an increasing number of schools are using dogs to enhance wellbeing. Working with Charlie provides pupils with many benefits, including building confidence and self-esteem. Charlie is used to provide consolation, comfort and as a breathing space. Pupils can, accompanied by an adult, take Charlie for a walk within the school grounds or sit with the dog for a few minutes in a quiet space.

A therapy dog is a dog trained to provide affection and comfort to students in the school. The most important characteristic of a therapy dog is its temperament. A good therapy dog must be friendly, patient, confident, at ease in all situations and gentle. Therapy dogs must enjoy human contact and be content to be petted and handled, sometimes clumsily. A therapy dog's primary job is to allow unfamiliar people to make physical contact with it and to enjoy that contact.

Pupils cannot fail in any way in their relationship with dogs: Dogs do not judge or condemn, and offer unconditional affection. Here at The Devonshire Hill Nursery and Primary School, pupils learn the principles of good pet ownership and are given a sense of responsibility through their contact with Charlie.

Charlie is a Golden Retriever, and has been carefully selected as a suitable 'Therapy Dog' for this type of environment. Charlie is well cared for and responsibly owned by Ms. Bates, Assistant Head for Inclusion.

Charlie will be fully socialised and trained. The aim is for Charlie to be assessed by an external assessor from the national charity "Pets as Therapy" to test that his temperament and characteristics are suitable for working with a range of audiences.

Charlie is supervised at all times by Ms. Bates or a nominated adult, and is handled consistently and safely.

Charlies handlers are aware of those staff and pupils who may be afraid of, or be allergic to, him. Pupils will only see the dog voluntarily.

The welfare and wellbeing of Charlie is paramount, and is provided with 'rest' periods during the school day to avoid any risk of stress.

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

- Charlie will be owned by Ms. Bates;
- Veterinary costs will be covered by the owner.
- Charlie is a Golden Retriever, chosen for his very mild temperament and good nature.
- The risk assessment (**Appendix A**) will be reviewed annually;
- All visitors are alerted to the fact that there is a dog in school on their arrival;

- Charlie is kept on a lead except when inside Ms. Bates' office. Charlie is not allowed in areas such as the staffroom and dining hall; and
- Registered Pets as Therapy dogs carry public liability insurance.

Management day-to-day. Charlie 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;
- Have had all injections prior to joining The Devonshire Hill Nursery and Primary School.

Pupils will:

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Charlie;
- Meet Charlie in a group of no more than three children;
- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Charlie every time they meet him;
- Always remain calm;
- Be gentle;
- Not put their face near Charlie's;
- Not disturb Charlie when eating or sleeping;
- Always approach Charlie standing up;
- Not feed Charlie;
- 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 Charlie is displaying any of these signs, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

The following minimum standards shall be in effect for Charlie to serve in the school.

- Charlie must be clean, well-groomed, and not have an offensive odour;
- Charlie must not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations;
- Charlie must not annoy any pupils or school personnel by seeking attention;
- Charlie must not vocalise unnecessarily;
- Charlie must not show any aggression towards people or other animals;
- Charlie must not solicit or steal food or other items from pupils or school personnel;
- Charlie must not pose a health or safety threat to any pupil, personnel or other persons.

The owner shall provide:

- Proof of current inoculations;
- Proof of health, such as a current health certificate from a veterinarian; and
- Proof of ongoing dog training
- PAT Test result (when taken)

Health and Safety Principles

Children will always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling Charlie. Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of Charlie at the time. Children must never be allowed to do this.

Should a bite occur (even playfully):

- Parents will be contacted immediately
- The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing
- The child/adult will be released for medical attention
- All staff will be informed

- A full investigation will take place
- The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the Headteacher.

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

The practical application of this policy will be reviewed annually or when the need arises by Ms. Bates, the Headteacher and the link governor.

A statement of the policy's effectiveness and the necessary recommendations for improvement will be presented to the Governing Body for further discussion and endorsement.

This policy was reviewed and endorsed by the Full Governing Body of The Devonshire Hill Nursery and Primary School on Tuesday 20th December 2016.