

# **Willow Tree Kindergarten**

## **Kindergarten Dog Policy**

### **Introduction**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally through contact with a dog. It increases their understanding of responsibility and develops empathy and nurturing skills. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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

Yes there is. Although there are a variety of other accidents, which can happen within the kindergarten environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out, this is included in this document (please refer to appendix 3).

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

### **School Policy**



Fig is a border collie dog who will come for the morning at kindergarten. She has a small crate inside for quiet space where she can rest and not interrupt the work and play of the children.

Fig joins the children in play in the garden, initially on a lead that is held by an adult although children can hold the lead too. As children settle Fig is allowed to be loose in the garden under adult supervision where she will play with children or rest quietly. The children are invited to stroke her when she is on a lead and they are taught to be gentle and understand how to read Fig's mode.

- 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 Teacher Manager has been informed

beforehand.

- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. There is a clear risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- 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.
- If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when out on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children must **never** be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

• 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.
- No-one should ever 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 them standing up.
- The children will be taught that when Fig becomes playful she may bite, they will put their hands in the air and say stop in a firm voice and wait for her to calm down to give her a toy
- Children should not go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- 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 they monitor the situation.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest and back and not her face or the top of her head.
- Children will always wash their hands with soap or hand sanitiser after playing dog.
  
- Children will be told that dogs express their feelings through their body language; Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that a 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 Fig is displaying any of these warning signs she should be removed from that particular situation or environment by an adult and put in her crate or pen to feel comfort and safety.*
  
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog on arrival
- Fig will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Elodie Rummage
- Children will be taught that not all dogs are like Fig and they cant assume that all dogs will be happy to be friendly

## **Actions**

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Teacher Manager as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Teacher Manager.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Teacher Manager will monitor the response to having a dog at kindergarten and make sure that staff, trustees and parents are aware of the policy and risk assessment.
- The Teacher Manager 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 outside school.

### *Appendix 1. Reasons to have a dog in kindergarten*

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:-

- 1) Calming behaviours
- 2) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 3) Increase confidence
- 4) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 5) 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.

### **Behaviour:**

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students also showed more

confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

### **Social Development:**

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help children build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in kindergarten, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children 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 children. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

The dog will bring much joy and help to all the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with.

Appendix 3: *Fig Risk Assessment*

<b>RISK ASSESSMENT FOR:</b> Fig Kindergarten dog		
<b>Establishment:</b>	<b>Assessment by:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Willow Tree Big Kindi	Elodie Rummage	September 2021

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Done
Hygiene	Children and staff - coming into contact with dog faeces or sick.	<p>Fig is house trained. Fig is walked and toileted before Kindergarten.</p> <p>During kindergarten time Fig is taken for a walk if she stays for a whole day and tends not to need the toilet during the morning session.</p> <p>Elodie Rummage will carry dog poo bags to remove faeces immediately in the rare event that she uses the garden for a toilet. The bags will be disposed of in the outside bin.</p> <p>If Fig is unwell she will be collected from the kindergarten and not return until she has recovered.</p>			
	Children and staff - contact with the dog then touching the mouth or food	<p>Elodie Rummage will carry hand sanitiser to give to anyone who has touched Fig after.</p> <p>During times when food is being prepared or eaten Fig will be in her crate or on a lead away from the food.</p>			

	Children and staff - fleas, ticks or worms etc.	Fig has all appropriate vaccinations and is regularly treated for fleas/ticks/worms  Fig is regularly brushed and checks for parasites.			
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Fig becomes overexcited and jumps up.	Children and staff could be scratched, clothes could be damaged, some children could find this behaviour scary.	Fig is being trained not to jump up at children.  Fig's claws will be monitored for length and clipped if long  The children will be taught through role modelling and discussions how to read Fig's behaviour and interact with her in a safe and calm manner to avoid her becoming overexcited.  Children who are nervous will be avoided at first and slowly introduced to Fig in very calm and controlled situations.			
Allergic reaction	Children and staff	Parents and children will be notified about Fig so they can raise any concerns.  Staff will be aware of students with allergies and will keep Fig away from them.  Dog bedding is regularly washed.			
Dog phobia	Children and staff - anxiety caused by coming into contact with Fig.	Parents and children will be notified about Fig so they can raise any concerns.  Staff will be aware of children who may be nervous and will keep Fig away from them.			
Dog bite	Children and staff - Fig becomes distressed or over excited and bites.	If she becomes excited while interacting with the children she will be put in her crate to calm down			

		<p>before being brought out to play again.</p> <p>The children will be taught that when she gets excited and playful they should raise their hands up and say no in a firm voice.</p>			
Fire alarm	Fig	<p>It will be clear at all times that Elodie Rummage is responsible for Fig and for taking her out of the building during a fire alarm.</p>			
Fig eats toxic food.	Fig	<p>.The children will be told about foods which they may have in kindergarten which are toxic for dogs and therefore they must not drop them on the floor (chocolate, raisins, grapes, avocado).</p> <p>Fig will rest in her crate during snack and meal times then taken outside after to not return in until the room is clean again.</p>			

Assessment review date: [December 2021]