

Specific Risk Assessment

Area: Kingstone High School - School Dog - Benji

Introduction:

Pet therapy is a guided interaction between a person and a trained animal. It also involves the animal's handler.

Pet therapy is also referred to as animal-assisted therapy (AAT). AAT is sometimes confused with animal-assisted activities (AAA). AAT is a formal, structured set of sessions that helps people reach specific goals in their treatment. AAA involves more casual meetings in which an animal and its handler interact with one or more people for comfort or recreation.

Pet therapy builds on the pre-existing human-animal bond. Interacting with a friendly pet can help many physical and mental issues. It can help reduce blood pressure and improve overall cardiovascular health. It can also release endorphins that produce a calming effect. This can help alleviate pain, reduce stress, and improve your overall psychological state.

The goals of a pet therapy program can include:

- increasing self-esteem
- increasing verbal communication
- developing social skills
- increasing willingness to join in activities
- improving interactions with others
- motivating willingness to exercise
- making you happier, lessening depression, and improving your outlook on life
- reducing anxiety because of its calming effects
- helping children learn empathic and nurturing skills
- improving motor skills and joint movement
- improving assisted or independent movement

The Leadership Team of The Kingstone Academy considered the options regarding the possibility of obtaining a dog as a school pet. A member of the Senior Leadership has a 3 year old Cocker spaniel with a gentle temperament and has attended a work based environment since he was a puppy, so it he will be introduced to the school environment from September 2021.

Benji will live with Mrs Ruvino in her home and be introduced to the school environment and the children gradually. He is registered with a local Vets' practice and is routinely vaccinated and up to date with all checks and medication. There are no diseases that could be caught from the dog as he is kept up-to-date with immunisations including rabies, and worming treatment is in line with European vet guidelines. A register of his annual health check is kept both by Mrs Ruvino and the vets' surgery. It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the puppy is invited to write to inform Mrs Ruvino of their wishes. This risk assessment will be reviewed annually and the impact of a school dog will be evaluated by the Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team.

The dog gets loose from Mrs Ruvino's office, his crate or from his lead.	Child/staff knocked to ground Child/staff scratched by Dog Child/staff bitten by Dog	There is a stair gate at Mrs Ruvino's door for when the door is open and the dog is in the room off the lead. In addition to this there is a crate in the room to separate from the meeting table if someone requests not to have contact with the dog. The dog's crate is big enough for her to be happy and safe during the school day and the children are taught not to tease her. If the dog does get loose from the office or her crate the teacher on duty will call for a designated staff member who will come and put the dog back in his crate. There are four members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if she needs attention at any other time, they are: 1. Mrs Ruvino 2. Miss Hughes 3. Mrs Swain 4. Mrs Seymour.	L M L
Dog hair causing allergies	Children/staff have allergic reactions	The school dog is a Cocker spaniel which is bathed and groomed regularly to remove excess moulting hair to reduce the chance of an allergic reaction. Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept by Mrs Ruvino and Office staff. Parents / Staff have been asked to highlight any allergies and a list of those who should not interact with the dog will be kept by Mrs Ruvino and Office staff. Fully supervised, children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction. Children have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog. Hand sanitiser will be kept in the areas where the dog will be kept. Wounds on exposed skin will be covered.	L
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children/staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this and dispose of it in a safe manner. Poo bags will be attached to the lead and used by staff member walking the dog. All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up-to-date. Flea and worming tablets are prescribed and given once per month. If the dog is sick she will not come into school until she is better. The dog will not enter the dining hall at meal times, she will never go into a food preparation area and/ or the kitchen.	L
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep	School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dog's day-to-day upkeep or medical bills or a claim made by a child.	The dog is the responsibility of Mrs Ruvino. She is financially responsible for all dog costs. The certificates are kept in school office and renewed annually.	L
Fire Alarm	Who has responsibility to remove dog from the building	Mrs Ruvino will be responsible for removing the dog from site.	L
Noise / Barking	Pupils who can't cope with noise e.g. autistic children	Cocker spaniels are bred to be sociable dogs and are often used as therapy dogs as they are known to be good with children.	L

Dog Phobia	Distress caused by close proximity to dog	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school if their child is scared to be in close contact with the dog. Parents are offered a programme of support for a child to help overcome aversion. Parents also offered the option of their child having no close contact.</p> <p>A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept by Mrs Ruvino and Office staff.</p> <p>Visitors advised dog is in the office and removed if requested.</p> <p>Notice on school website.</p>	L
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Procedure(s) for ongoing risk assessment review (e.g. any special briefings): Reviewed Annually

Completed by: Rebekah Ruvino

Date: 23.09.21