



The school dog - Dottie

This document is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office.



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PURPOSE & INTRODUCTION

There are benefits to having a well-being dog in a school setting. Statistics have shown that a dog in a school has a positive effect on wellbeing and mental health. Dogs are being introduced into schools, across the country, because of the positive results that schools are seeing.

Both children and staff benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with the dog.

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. The risk assessment will be reviewed annually.

Dottie is a Dalmatian, she is calm, sociable, unaggressive, affectionate and of a gentle nature. The breed was also chosen due to low shedding. Dottie has undertaken 'The Dog Mentor programme,' and has a Gold Award accreditation. The role of the Well-being dog is to react and respond to the young person and their environment. This is under the guidance and direction of their handler Mrs Page, our school Learning Mentor.

Dottie has now been a member of the Woodlands School family since December 2021. Research into the effects of a well-being dog in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance.
- Decrease in pupil anxiety behaviours.
- Positive changes towards learning and improved motivation.
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers.
- Calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties.
- Improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress, and improved self-esteem.
- Encourages expression and participation in more withdrawn children.

As one of our KS2 children said, "Just seeing Dottie makes me smile and makes my day better straight away!"

- Dottie comes to school 2-3 times a week, between 8am- 12pm.

OFFER

- Dottie welcomes children and families into the school gates.
- Children may see Dottie walking around the school, at selected times of the day, depending on the need daily.
- Children can see Dottie in her room that she shares with Mrs Page throughout the day (invite only).

- Dottie takes part in planned sessions with children throughout the morning which include: Dog Mentor programme, ELSA, Drawing and Talking and Lego Therapy groups.
- Children see Dottie in the weekly sessions named above, for 30 minutes and the sessions are delivered over a 4-8 week period.

WHO CAN SEE DOTTIE?

- Pupils in Year R to Year 6 will see Dottie around the school.
- For targeted sessions, teachers complete a wellbeing form that is passed to the pastoral team.
- The Pastoral team agree what support is best for the child and if appropriate, is put on a waiting list to see Mrs Page.
- Parents/Carers can also speak to staff if they feel their child would benefit from well-being support.
- Dottie will attend events, on occasions, so the whole school community can see her.

MANAGEMENT & AGREEMENT

- Dottie will not be allowed in school if she is unwell.
- Dottie will complete her sessions with the children in the well-being room or an outdoor area within the school.
- Children will not be left alone/unsupervised, with Dottie, at any time.
- Children will be reminded of appropriate behaviour when attending any sessions with Dottie – remain calm, be gentle, do not put your face near the dog's face, always approach the dog standing up, do not feed the dog.
- Parents/Carers will give signed permission for their child to partake in sessions that include Dottie.
- All children that have been in contact with Dottie will undergo hand washing before and after sessions.
- Dottie will be always under the guidance, full control and supervision of Mrs Page and will be on a lead, when walking around the school.
- Dottie will not enter the classrooms.
- If Dottie is in any of the school communal areas, inside the school building, for a prolonged period, the area will be cleaned appropriately; relevant staff will be informed, and actions will be taken to ensure the safety of any child who is unable to access Dottie.
- The risk assessment is completed by the 'The Dog Mentor' and will be updated annually.
- If a child cannot access Dottie, a personal risk assessment for the child will be put in place.
- Dottie's owner will keep Dottie up to date with all her annual boosters and will administer flea and worm treatment, monthly. Dottie will attend the vets twice a year, for regular health checks.
- The school, in agreement and with approval of the School Governing Body, sent a letter to all Parents/Carers on 2nd December 2021 informing them of Dottie.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Children and adults will always wash their hands or use hand sanitiser after handling the dog.

Any dog excrement will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by Mrs Page. Children will 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, by a First Aider.
- 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 and the risk assessment reviewed accordingly.