

Shefford Lower School School Mascot Dog Policy



Written by	Adopted by staff	Ratified by governors	Review date
Jen Hall and Polly Ross	February 2023 in DRAFT		January 2024

1. Rationale and Aim

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. 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. It is a risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out (see Appendix 3).

2. Policy

- a. The dog is owned by Mrs Hall. During the school day Rosco will be based in Paula Hudson and Julia Parry's offices. He will have access to **pre-seen** to middle offices. Students will not be allowed access to him unless consent is given by parent/guardian and it is for a specific pastoral intervention. This is given to all new starters.
- b. The seven named dog handlers are: **Jen Hall, Julia Parry, Lauren Robinson, Paula Hudson, Polly Ross Pamela Finch, Hannah Moore.**
- c. The dog is a Cockapoo. He was chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children. He is very sociable and friendly and he is also a hypo allergenic breed that is well known to be good with families with allergies. He has also had specific puppy training.
- d. Staff, parents and children have been informed by newsletter and Parentmail that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been produced and this will be reviewed annually.
- e. 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 on the visitor's checklist and poster of Rosco. The school will ensure that the dog is kept separate from these children. (See Risk Assessment).
- f. If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school.
- g. The dog will be kept on short lead walking at all times with the handler. The dog will move to designated areas (Paula's office, Julia's office) on a short lead, to heel under the full control of dog handler. Forest area and playground in emergencies with the dog handler and on a short lead. The dog will never be in classrooms.
- h. Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be supervision at all times by one of the dog handlers.
- i. 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 and must never 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 it standing up. Mrs Hall has used information from The Dogs Trust education team to provide regular assemblies (termly) for all the children about safely handling dogs and rules of being around Rosco in school.
- j. Children should never go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating.
- k. Children will be allowed to pet Rosco under planned and supervised activity. Everyone must wait until Rosco is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him (ensuring he is not occupied or distracted). Pupils are taught and reminded to ask before stroking Rosco. Hands must be washed after coming in contact with Rosco.
- l. 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 s/he monitors the situation. Groups of no more than 3-5 at any given time so that he doesn't feel overwhelmed. Rosco will not go on playground at playtimes.
- m. Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the 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 the dog is displaying any of these warning signs he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment. Children

should not eat close to the dog. Rosco will remain in Paula Hudson's office during lunch times for quiet time and to be away from children eating.

- n. Adults will not introduce Rosco to an unmanaged environment. Mobility short lead to heel.
- o. Rosco may show examples of resource guarding, if he feels something of value is going to be taken away from him. (This may include, a ball, equipment he has found on the floor that he shouldn't have – lego, stationary, etc). Pupils must be reminded that if he has something in his mouth don't try to take it off him. The adult present will deal with Rosco by giving him a high value treat and say 'drop'. Rosco has been trained to respond to this. Never try and take the item out of his mouth as he may resource guard if this happens.
- p. Children should be careful to stroke Rosco on his body, chest, and not by his face or top of head or near his harness. Children will be reminded of this directly before interacting with the dog. (This will be modelled in Mrs Hall's dog assembly that all children will experience annually. The adult in charge will remind pupils of this prior to their access to Rosco. Children in SLS will be taught these signs to look for in a termly assembly with Mrs Hall.
- q. Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- r. Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog for intervention purposes.
- s. All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival (dog information sheet provided by office) and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher ASAP.
- t. Visitors are not able to give informed consent regarding the suitability of Rosco in their company (not knowing him/his personality). Rosco should be removed to an alternative safe space in school if there is a meeting in the room where Rosco is.
- u. The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. A timetable will be provided and when Rosco is in school he will be signed in and out by Jen Hall on the school system.
- v. The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the named adult he is with at the time of an evacuation. Staff will be aware he is in, to ensure he has been safely evacuated from the building.
- w. If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Head Teacher.
- x. The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.
- y. The Headteacher along with Jen Hall, Polly Ross, Julia Parry, Lauren Robinson, Hannah Moore and Paula Hudson are responsible for implementing this policy.
- z. Teachers, staff, students, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.
- aa. 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.

3. Please see the following appendices for more information.

- a. APPENDIX 1 – Benefits of having a dog in school.
- b. APPENDIX 2 – Frequently Asked Questions
- c. APPENDIX 3 – Risk Assessment

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- a. The effectiveness of this policy will be regularly monitored by the Jen Hall with Polly Ross and Pamela Finch.

5. Implementation and Review

- a. This policy will be circulated to all Shefford Lower school staff and published on the school website for parent/carer information. The policy will be reviewed annually.

APPENDIX 1

1. BENEFITS OF HAVING A DOG IN SCHOOL

In summary, having Rosco working and helping in the school environment we would like to achieve the following:

- a. Improve academic achievement
- b. Increase literacy skills
- c. Calming behaviours and positive attachments
- d. Increase social skills and self-esteem
- e. Increase confidence
- f. Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- g. Help prevent truancy and improve attendance
- h. Motivate children who are often less attentive

2. COGNITIVE

- a. Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem solving and game playing.

3. BEHAVIOURAL

- a. Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. We would hope that by having Rosco in school we would see a difference in the behaviour of students in terms of improved attitude toward school and learning, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. If students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, then can hopefully better understand how classmates may feel.

4. SOCIAL

- a. A dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. After experiencing unconditional love and trust from a dog we would expect to see enhanced relationships with peers and staff. Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching student's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, teach kindness, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Involving students in the daily care of school dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

5. EMOTIONAL

- a. A school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Students would learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.
- b. Students encouraged to gently pat or talk to the dog to teach sensitive touch and to help them to be calm and promotes provides tactile stimulation.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL

- a. A dog increases the sense of a family environment, being part of something, another purpose for coming to school. Some of these benefits listed above will continue for the young person long after the school day is over. It will hopefully also boost the student's connection to the school environment.

7. ACADEMIC

- a. Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop their literacy skills and build confidence in reading. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud This activity can create a calming effect on the pupil, as well the dog will listen to the pupil read with no judgement or criticism and they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. This in turn creates an environment where a student's enthusiasm for reading can grow an also develop the confidence to read aloud. Rosco will be able to support reluctant readers.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Students will have opportunity to walk with the dog on school grounds with one of the identified dog handlers, if this is deemed necessary to support specific pupils. This in turn would allow for a potential improvement in student's attendance as they have a responsibility to the dog.

9. ATTENDANCE

- a. We would see an improvement in attendance for students given some additional responsibility regarding Rosco. It is also another reason for the pupil to want to come to school.

10. SPORTING

- a. Rosco will become a school mascot and could attend assemblies that are appropriate for him to be included in.

11. TRANSITION

- a. Rosco will be part of the year 4-year 5 transition process. Students who need extra support and visits with regard to the step up would be able to spend time with him to support transition worries, if needed.

12. REWARD SYSTEM

- a. Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time to interact with Rosco. Walking, grooming, reading with, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It could also be an incentive for positive behaviour or any form of pupil achievement.

13. OVERCOMING PHOBIAS

- a. There are students who do have dog phobias, a school dog and careful de-sensitisation programme could help to reduce some of these fears.

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOL DOG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Hall and her family. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Will the dog be a distraction?

When in school Rosco will be based in Julia Parry or Paula Hudson's offices, depending on the timetable. He will have access to quiet space & in Paula's office for some 'chill' time. Rosco will always be accompanied by an adult and will never be on his own with a pupil.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog and a reputable dog trainer has been used.

Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Hall, as the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training. Appropriate professional training has been completed and is continually reinforced.

How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Rosco will be toileted on the grassed area of the car park.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

Rosco will be well looked after. He will live with Mrs Hall who will bring the dog in to school daily. He has undergone puppy training classes. Rosco will be fully vaccinated, will visit the vet regularly for all the necessary injections, as well as regular check-ups. He will also be regularly groomed and is fully insured. If Rosco is unwell for any reason he will stay at home. He will be walked, fed and hydrated during the day. He will have access to a quiet area in Paula's office where he will be able to have 'quiet time'. The wellbeing of the dog will be regularly reviewed by Mrs Hall and the named adults that work with him.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. (See Risk Assessment). The breed of dog is known for minimal molting, he is given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

It is completely understandable that there will be some concerns about possible allergic reactions to a school dog. Rosco will be subjected to a very thorough cleanliness and grooming regime. He is also a hypo allergenic breed that is well known to be good with families with allergies. Rosco will only work with students who have voluntarily expressed an interest to do so and after discussion with the Polly Ross, Jen Hall or Julia Parry as to whether it would be a beneficial intervention. Permission would be sought in advance to any contact. Rosco will be based in Polly, Paula or Julia's offices.

My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Some children may have had upsetting or traumatic experiences and therefore be fearful of dogs (or indeed other animals). The dog will only come into contact with students whose parents have given their permission. The dog will be based in Julia's office most of the time and in Paula's office for quiet time and lunch times. This is away from the main part of the school. The dog will be a puppy and will grow up in the school environment surrounded by children. Experience and research have shown that, with proper guidance, handling and time, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and gain a greater appreciation for them.

APPENDIX 3 – RISK ASSESSMENT

Assessment conducted by: Pamela Finch/Jen Hall	Job title: Head teacher/Class teacher and owner	Covered by this assessment: All staff, students and visitors
Date of assessment: 18.01.23	Review interval: Annually	Date of next review:

Related documents
Health and Safety Policy

Risk rating		Likelihood of occurrence		
		Probable	Possible	Remote
Likely impact	Major Causes major physical injury, harm or ill-health.	Low	Medium	Medium
	Severe Causes physical injury or illness requiring first aid.	Low	Medium	High
	Minor Causes physical or emotional discomfort.	Medium	High	High

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Health – diseases and parasites	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog has 7 designated handlers who are in charge of feeding and caring for the dog while on school premises, ensuring there is a supply of fresh water available. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog will go to the vet for a regular check-up, to identify whether the dog has any transmittable diseases. On hot days, the handler will ensure 	JH/PH/PR/JP/LR/HM/PF	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The handlers are responsible for permitting people to touch the dog aligned to school policy. The dog is permitted only in outside areas, Paula and Julia's offices or other areas of school for certain events and always with a handler. The area is kept clean and secure for the wellbeing of the animal, students, staff and visitors. School events will be individually risk assessed. The dog is given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises. The dog is fully inoculated flea treated and worm treated regularly. 		there is appropriate provision in place to keep the dog cool, and ensure the dog avoids too much activity during the hottest part of the day.			
Hygiene	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog is suitably toilet trained. The designated area for the dog to defecate, (grass area of carpark), is situated away from students and staff. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the dog is ill with an infection or disease, it will not return to the school until it has recovered. 	JH/PH/PR/JP	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All feces are immediately picked up by the handler, using a clinical waste bag, and disposed of into the clinical waste bin. • The handler immediately washes their hands with sufficient soap and water after picking up feces. • Any soiled dog bedding is immediately disposed of in sealed clinical waste bags, and into the clinical waste bin. • The handler takes the dog's bedding home regularly to wash it. • Any students/staff/visitors who touch the dog are advised to wash their hands afterwards, and sufficient hand washing provision is provided throughout the school. • Anyone touching the dog, who has an exposed wound, must have the wound suitably covered. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand sanitiser is provided for anyone who touches the dog. 			

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Bites and scratches	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dog has grown up in the family environment and as such, has been trained well, and is used to coming into close contact with people. It has also undergone puppy training course and a second step-up training course. • Pupils meeting Rosco will have social story work and meet with him in his managed environments. • Students/staff/visitors around the dog are closely supervised by the handler. • Students/staff/visitors are advised not to put their face close to the dog or go near items in his mouth or touch his harness. • The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students/staff/visitors are only permitted to stroke the dog when the dog is sat/laying down in his managed area and with his handler. • The dog is provided with a place it can go to get away from people. • Rosco has received additional training to support with his resource guarding of toys or found times that he regards as high value. • The supervising adult will remind all pupils and staff not to try and take a toy or high value item away from Rosco. A high value alternative will be offered and Rosco will be told to 'drop' the item. 	JH/PH/PR/JP	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Minor injuries related to dog housing and equipment	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All dog bedding is regularly checked for defects. All dog equipment is stored (in Julia or Paula's office) when not in use. The dog's food and water bowls are kept out of the path of people to avoid any trips. Any spillages from the dog's bowl are wiped up immediately. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All dog bedding and baby gates are to be checked regularly for defects and replaced as required. 	JH	Ongoing	L
Allergies	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Termly allergy and dog check in central records. The dog breed is hypoallergenic and as such this will limit any allergic reactions to the dog dander. Students and staff known to have allergies to animals have restricted access to the dog. All students and staff are advised not to touch their face after touching the dog. All students/staff/visitors are advised to wash their hands 	Y	The dog will not go into Holly Class where there is a known severe allergy to dog saliva.	JH/PH/PR/JP	Ongoing	L

Issue	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	Recommended further actions to be taken to reduce risks	By whom	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		thoroughly after touching the dog.					
Phobias	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and staff known to have a phobia of dogs are given restricted access to the dog. The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. 	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During busy times, such as breaks and time between lessons when lots of students and staff will be coming past the dog, the dog will be kept in its area (Paula's office) or in a large space (field) so can easily be avoided. 	JH/PH/PR/JP	Ongoing	L