



## Hillcross Primary School

# Educational Assistance Dog Policy

### Introduction

At Hillcross Primary School, we are dedicated to working together to provide an inspirational and exciting learning environment where children learn and develop academically and also learn valuable skills for life. Our Educational Assistance Dog will become an integral part of the school community since it will:

- benefit the children educationally and emotionally
- increase the children's understanding of responsibility
- develop children's empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog

The dog will be supervised by the Deputy Headteacher, Helen Beckett, at all times when in contact with children and will be based in her office. The dog will be owned by Helen and live with her when not at school and will be affiliated with and trained under the guidance of 'Dogs Helping Kids' charity. At all times the stipulations of the charity must be upheld.

### Aims and Objectives

- Increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write in reluctant readers who read to the dog
- Reduce anxiety in some children who find school challenging
- Increase in intra and interpersonal skills amongst the children who work with the dog
- Build self-esteem by enabling children to learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries.
- Be of benefit and bring pleasure to children and staff
- Reward those children who have performed well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject/Habit of Mind by spending time with the dog during lunch or break to interact with the dog.
- Encourage the social, moral, spiritual and personal development of each child
- Children may share in aspects of 'ownership' of the dog, particularly significant if they don't/can't have a dog at home. This will be under the supervision of the Deputy Headteacher
- The dog's presence will foster responsibility and commitment to pet ownership
- Specified children may participate in training the dog, which will enable them to recognise the need for patience and perseverance, gentleness and kindness
- Children (and staff) with a fear of dogs may be helped to overcome this fear
- Promote well-being and reduce stress amongst staff
- Enable children to recognise that hygiene is an important part of pet management for themselves as well as animals
- Enrichment of our curriculum through the use of our dog as a first-hand experience. The dog will motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- Enhance the learning environment by creating a sense of security and family warmth for our children

### General Points:



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- The dog will be owned by Helen Beckett and will be a Labrador - chosen for its gentle and affectionate temperament and the short-haired coat
- The Governing Body is in full support of the school having a dog and this was agreed by all governors in the minutes dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017
- The Educational Assistance Dog will be an attending dog for the charity Dogs Helping Kids. Dogs Helping Kids is a unique charity with its headquarters based in North Devon, England. They are one of the only organisations in the country training and assessing dogs purely to work in a school, college, and library environment as both educational and therapeutic aids. Dogs Helping Kids believes that a dog should only be working with a child or teenager, in an educational environment, if it has been trained, assessed and certified to do so. Each one of their Certified DHK Educational Assistance Dogs has had to complete a two year training programme, pass 6 increasingly difficult assessments, and once certified, undergo an annual assessment. This is for the safety of the children, the staff, the Educational Assistance Dog owner and the Educational Assistance Dog.
- The dog will be fully vaccinated and kept in good health, under the care of Runnymede Vets
- The dog is fully insured with Lifetime Pet Cover
- If the dog is ill, she will not come into school

### Provision/Methods

- A full risk assessment has been completed before the dog joins the school community and this will be reviewed annually
- The school has taken all reasonable steps to advise stakeholders of the Educational Assistance Dog and to mitigate any risks, including full communication with stakeholders. Staff have been informed by the Deputy Headteacher that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school, and children via assemblies. The school has written an Educational Assistance Dog Policy and an Educational Assistance Dog risk assessment.
- Briefings for stakeholders to remind people of the salient points of this policy will take place at the start of each school year, and during the year for any new starters – staff and children
- Information about the Educational Assistance Dog will form part of the school's recruitment practice for any potential members of staff and part of the school induction policy for new staff
- When fully grown, the owner *may* supervise and walk our dog around the playground if joining children at break and lunch times
- The dog must remain on a lead and the usual protocol for stroking a dog must apply
- Children can have closer contact by assisting with training alongside the owner outside of normal whole class lessons
- Our Educational Assistance Dog will be toilet trained with an established toileting routine. There is a specified toilet area that is not within the play space for pupils (the SLT/Staffroom quad garden)
- If the Educational Assistance Dog is poorly, it will not be able to work in school until it has returned to full health
- The owner will have an understanding of canine stress signals. If they see their dog showing these signals, they will immediately remove the dog from the situation.
- Children with a fear of dogs may engage in a programme of contact designed to enable them to overcome their fear. Individual parental permission must be given before such a programme commences
- The owner may walk the dog on the school field throughout the day in order to train the dog and provide it with suitable breaks.
- The dog *may* spend some time in the staffroom welcomed by staff enjoying contact
- All children will learn about good communication, procedures and consistent behaviour around our dog before they have contact with her. This will be regularly emphasised thereafter and posters around school to remind children (and staff) of this
- Children and staff who choose to have no contact can do so



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- When the Deputy Headteacher leaves the office to go to another area in the school the dog can remain in the office or move with the Deputy Headteacher, if appropriate. If the Deputy Headteacher is not present, children **must not** have access to the dog.

### Allergies

- All pupils must either wash their hands or be provided with sanitising gel after touching the Educational Assistance Dog
- The Educational Assistance Dog will be groomed regularly to decrease levels of dog allergens and shedding of hair as well as removing saliva from the coat
- The Educational Assistance Dog will be on a premium diet as this will help reduce dander production
- Parents may choose to opt-out of their children having any interaction with the dog and the class teacher and Deputy Headteacher will have a list of these key children

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### The Governing Body

- to ensure that the school has a written policy
- to review serious incidents should they occur

#### The Headteacher

- to implement this policy, but may delegate this responsibility to the Deputy Headteacher
- to hold staff accountable for ensuring the risk assessment measures are in place at all time

#### The Deputy Headteacher as the dog's owner

- reviewing the risk assessment at least yearly but on-going when necessary
- ensuring the dog is trained under the guidance of 'Dogs Helping Kids'
- cover the cost of the dog, bedding, vets bills and own dog insurance

#### Staff, visitors and children

- follow the risk assessment
- promote and uphold full hygiene routines
- follow the positive handling procedure
- must not act in any way that challenges or undermines the DHK training programme and expectations
- approach or fuss the dog without first checking with the owner, Helen Beckett

#### **Visitors to the School:**

- All supply staff will be advised that the school has a dog and asked regarding any allergies
- Visitors will be asked on arrival if they would prefer not to have any contact with the Educational Assistance Dog
- Visitors to the school will be given an Educational Assistance Dog information leaflet designed by one of the children in school

#### **Conduct with the Dog:**

- Children and adults will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog at assemblies and during the school day by displays and posters
- Children and adults must follow the instructions of the owner at all times and without question



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- The owner will decide how many students/adults can be with the dog at any one time
- Children on the parental opt-out must not go near the dog at any time
- Children and adults should remain calm around the dog
- Children and adults must not make sudden movements or loud noises which may scare or threaten the dog
- Children and adults must not put their face near to the dog and should always approach it standing up
- Children and adults must never go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping or eating
- Children and adults must NEVER play roughly with the dog
- Children and adults must not feed the dog their own food or eat close to the dog at any time. This includes leaving food discarded as rubbish on the floor
- Children and adults must always wash their hands after handling the dog
- Children and adults not abiding by the above do so at their own risk
- Any deliberate attempt to harm the Educational Assistance Dog will result in exclusion/staff disciplinary measure
- Children and adults must always check with the owner, Helen Beckett, before approaching the dog and must NEVER do so without Helen being present unless previously agreed.

### 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. We are committed to treating all members of the school community fairly and challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion. 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 member of the school community and it helps to promote equality and accessibility at our school. The curriculum is planned to be inclusive and meet the needs and interests of a full range of learners. Activities and resources will be differentiated and adult support used to ensure that children access the curriculum and make the best possible progress.

### Safeguarding Commitment

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, in line with the most recent version of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We take seriously our duty of care to our pupils and staff which includes safeguarding them from the risk of being drawn into terrorism - this includes not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit. We work closely with social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Radicalisation is recognised as a specific safeguarding issue and is addressed in line with the Government Prevent Strategy and The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

**Approved:** Governing Body

**Date:** July 2018

**Review date:** July 2019