



## **Moat Farm Infant School School Dog Policy**

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<b>Chairs Signature</b>	<b>Hannah Massey</b>

## **MOAT FARM INFANT SCHOOL SCHOOL DOG POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Our education at Moat Farm Infant School is not just about learning to read and write, it is about developing the whole child. 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 and staff can take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. We believe the addition of a school dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of children's wider education, skills and well-being.

We are a very happy school and our ethos is underpinned by a child-centered nurturing and holistic approach to education. Our school motto, "At Moat Farm Infants every day we learn, achieve, have fun and play."

Mrs Walker (Head Teacher) and the school Governors have agreed that the school can have a school dog, and the dog will undertake specialised school dog training before interacting with the children. Parents will be informed by a letter and additional information will be on the school website.

### **RATIONALE:**

The value of pet therapy is widely accepted as a powerful aid to communication and motivation. Research has shown that companion dogs can improve the well-being of children, reducing their anxiety levels by making any environment, and in this case a school environment a happier and more enjoyable place to be. Dogs can be a great comfort to children who are upset in any way and in need of calm, consolation, comfort, or distraction before being able to communicate with an adult about the nature of their distress. A dog can motivate and encourage participation, increase understanding or responsibility, develop empathy and nurturing skills and improve both behaviour and self-esteem.

- A calming effect on pupils, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or special educational needs.
- Fosters a sense of responsibility in children.
- Improved behaviour, concentration and attendance.
- Increased exercise and movement if they participate in dog walking activities.
- Reduced stress and improved self-esteem.
- Encourages respect and therefore improves pupil's relationships with each other, teachers and parents
- Teaches children to nurture and respect life.

- Helps work undertaken with the most vulnerable children and educational improvements in children who find learning in school more difficult.
- Helps children build confidence with reading and speaking.
- Helps children to self-regulate their emotions when they are feeling stressed.

## **OUR SCHOOL DOG**

Our school dog is a Cockapoo called 'Lottie', she is owned by Mrs Davis and will go home with her every day and in school holidays. This breed of dog was chosen as they are hypoallergenic, child-friendly, sociable, and have outstanding trainability.

Lottie will be a fully-fledged member of our school community. She was born on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021, and will begin her work in school in September 2021. While in school, Lottie's main place of residence will be in Mrs Davis' office, which is secure and separate from the classrooms. She will undertake training by 'The Dog Mentor' for her role in school along with a small number of staff who will be her handlers in school.

Children will be able to interact with the dog under strict supervision at certain times of the day/week. As she grows older her timetable in school and the work she will do with children will increase. She will not be allowed to roam the school grounds and will be supervised at all times.

All children will have the opportunity to learn how to behave around dogs, and parents can withdraw permission for their child to be in contact with the dog.

A full risk assessment has been produced and will be reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary. This will be shared with all staff and be available on the school website. The dog's health and well-being will be prioritised along with those of the staff and children. The dog is fully insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be up to date. If the dog is ill, she will not come to school.

When Lottie has completed her training and is a little bit older, she will have a timetable for her role in school. She will be used to promote positive behaviour of children in school, and support children who are experiencing anxiety or self-confidence issues. Lottie will also support children with their reading confidence and fluency, by being a very patient listener. Children will also be rewarded for their hard work or resilience by being invited to help walk Lottie in the school grounds, alongside an adult.

**This policy applies to the regulated school dog only. It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property.** No other dogs will be permitted on the school site with parents or children.

## **RULES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

Children and adults will be reminded of what is appropriate behavior around Lottie. All children in school will be taught how to behave around and approach dogs safely, and how to respond to a dog's unwanted behavior. They are taught that they must ask if they want to pet Lottie when they see her around school. This is an important life lesson for all children.

1. Ignore Lottie and speak to staff first.
2. Ask permission to approach.
3. Four paws on the floor. (everyone needs to be consistent with this)
4. Remain calm around the dog.
5. Let sleeping dogs lie (Lottie will need times of rest in school in her crate/bed)
6. Wash hands after touching the dog.

## **THE DOG MENTOR TRAINING**

This dog training programme has been built upon the benefits of the human-animal bond by providing children positive experiences with dogs that can help them educationally, developmentally, emotionally and socially. Five members of staff will undertake the Dog Mentor Training in school. This training for the school dog and its nominated dog handlers will include;

- Assessment of the dog and the staff who will work with it in school.
- Practical Training of the dog in the school environment.
- Accreditation to the programme once training has been completed.
- Affiliation to the Dog Mentor Programme.

## **VISITORS TO SCHOOL**

All visitors will be informed about the school dog upon arrival to school, and will be asked about allergies or if they would prefer not to have contact with Lottie. Lottie will always have a known school adult with her at all times in school.

## **CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL DOG**

- Staff, children and visitors known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near Lottie.

- Parents are asked to advise school if their child is not to have direct contact with Lottie for health/emotional reasons. A meeting can be arranged for this discussion to take place and such wishes will be respected. This is with the understanding that while no 1:1 contact will be initiated for contact with Lottie, day to day school life contact cannot be prevented (for example, through classroom visits, assembly visits, walks around the school site).
- Anyone with a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with the dog. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to teach them how to manage this and maybe even overcome their fears.
- Children will never be left alone with the dog and there will always be appropriate adult supervision when Lottie is with children.
- When moving around school, Lottie will always be on a short lead and under control of her handler. Lottie will wear her orange coat when working in school.
- Always approach the dog slowly & calmly; children will be taught to ask permission before interacting with Lottie, and to initiate this with the back of their hand for the dog to sniff.
- Children will not stare into the dog's eyes as this can be threatening to the dog. Children will not put their face near the dog and should always approach her standing up.
- Children and staff will not go near or disturb the dog while she is eating or sleeping.
- All interactions with Lottie must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times.
- The dog will be based in Mrs Davis' office but will often be on the playground at the beginning and end of the school day, as well as some play and lunch times. Other trained handlers will take the dog to help with some interventions when appropriate.
- Lottie may visit classes for story time or to help with particular projects, such as learning and caring for animals.

### **MEET OUR SCHOOL DOG**

Lottie is a Cockapoo, and she was born on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This breed was chosen as they make great therapy dogs as they are an intelligent breed that will respond well to training, they have a hypoallergenic coat and have a very friendly demeanor.

Lottie will spend time in school during the summer holidays to become familiar with the smells, sounds and surroundings of the school building, where she will have time to explore and have a good sniff of the school building. Lottie will be brought to school most days by Mrs Davis. Until she has completed her 'Dog

Mentor' accreditation, her interaction with children around school will be minimal, and when she has completed her training her interactions and timetable will be amended to include supporting specific interventions in school.

As a young puppy, there will be opportunities for the children to meet Lottie in assemblies or when she pops into classes with Mrs Davis or another trained member of staff. She will be able to provide inspiration and motivation for children's work and behavior. She will also be on the playground in the morning and after school to greet the children and parents.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's risk assessment.

For further information about the benefits of dog being in schools please use the following links.

[Bark and Read | Charity work | The Kennel Club](#)

[Discover the Benefits of Community Dogs in Schools \(dogsforgood.org\)](#)

[Pets in schools | Blue Cross](#)

[the dogs trust guide to the use of school dogs.pdf](#)