



**LIME HILLS ACADEMY**

## **School Dog Policy**

### **Introduction**

“Every school should have a dog or another pet to reduce stress in the classroom” (Sir Anthony Shelton; cited in BBC, 2019)

We strongly believe that the well-being of our students is equally as important as their education and that it is very important to provide our young people with a range of therapeutic sources to support their development and progress.

We believe there is significant potential for dogs to help young people in a range of educational environments, bringing benefits to their academic, emotional and social development. These benefits can include but are not exclusive to:

### **Emotional**

Evidence suggests a school dog can potentially improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and lift mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Students can identify with animals and have empathy with the dog, and so they may better understand how classmates may feel.

### **Cognitive**

Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing. Dogs have also been used successfully in reading programmes, as students develop literacy skills and build confidence through both the calming effect the dog’s presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, which is especially crucial to struggling and reluctant

readers. Research also suggests that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the students they mix with.

## **Social**

A dog can provide a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. Working with dogs can help students to learn about negative and positive reinforcement, about body language and social cues and boundaries.

Students could potentially have the opportunity to learn how to care for the dog, including walking and grooming. Research suggests that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care.

## **Physical and Sensory**

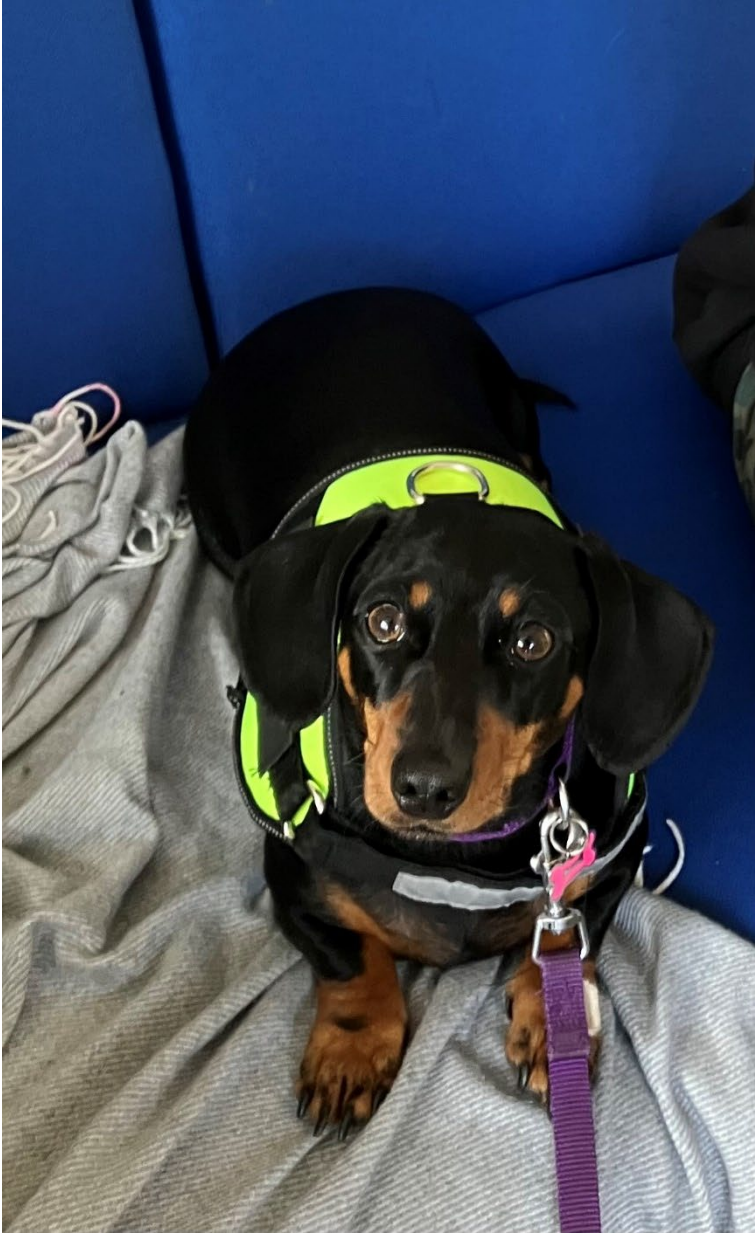
Interaction with a dog potentially helps reduce blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses

## **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

There are a variety of accidents that can occur within a school environment on a daily basis and these far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, as with any risk, a thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document.

Additionally, there is also the risk of compromised welfare of the dog: the school environment can be a very busy, noisy and unpredictable place; studies suggest that environmental and social stress leads to increased irritability in dogs, increasing the risk of an injury and incident. Therefore, the physical and emotional welfare of the dog will be of the highest priority, as demonstrated in this policy.

School Policy for named dog: Peggy



- Peggy is owned by and lives with Mrs White and as such all veterinary care and necessary costs for caring for Peggy will be the responsibility of Mrs White.
- Peggy is a 4 year old dachshund. She lives in a home with two adults and a child. She and Mrs White hold Puppy 1 Certificate with Eye2Eye. She is a smooth short haired dachshund.
- Staff, visitors and Students 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. The dog will be restricted to very specific areas within the school building.
- Peggy will be kept on a lead when moving through the school building or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- Peggy will be supervised by an appropriate adult at all times.
- If Peggy is ill she will not come to school.
- Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around a dog.
- Students will not be allowed near the dog when she is sleeping, eating or in her crate.
- Students must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Students will be reminded not to feed the dog food that is meant for human consumption.
- Students will be reminded not to put their face near to the dog.
- Students will be reminded to wash their hands after playing with the dog and/or handling her.
- Growling is a very important behaviour used by a domestic dog to signify that she feels threatened. If the dog growls at any time, the dog will be separated from the student or students immediately.
- Students will be encouraged to remain calm around the dog. Failure to do so will impact on their access to the dog.

# School Dog Frequently Asked Questions

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

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs White and she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

**Q. Is the dog from a reputable breeder?**

A. Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and chosen on the basis of the typical temperament of the breed and her parents. Peggy is not Kennel Club registered.

**Q. Will the dogs be a distraction?**

A. The dog will be kept in the offices of Mrs White. The offices are separate from the classrooms. Staff will also have the opportunity to meet the dog.

**Q. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Who is responsible for training?**

A. Mrs White will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result will be responsible for her being trained.

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

A. In the interest of hygiene, the dog will be toileted in specific outdoor areas away from the classrooms and students. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

**Q. How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

A. The dog will be exercised appropriately at home before and/or after school. The dog will be kept in an office in a quiet area of the school, will be fed regularly and appropriately by Mrs White and will

have access to a crate and/or bed. If the dog is eating or sleeping, students will not be allowed access to the dog. Students will be given strict verbal and written guidance around how to behave appropriately around the dog. All Student and visitor contact with the dog will be planned and supervised.

**Q. How will this be managed where pupils or staff have allergies**

A. Pupils and staff will not have to touch the dog. The dog has a high-quality diet and is regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

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

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless they wish to.