



**St Stephen's Tockholes C.E.
Primary School
School Dog Policy**

Rationale and Aims

We strongly believe that the well-being of our children is equally as important as their education and that it is very important to provide them with a range of therapeutic sources to support their development and progress. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. Evidence has shown that well-being dogs can enhance children's psychological development, improve social skills, and increase self-esteem among other benefits. Dogs can also teach responsibility, compassion, and respect for other living things.

We believe there is significant potential for dogs to help children in a range of educational environments, bringing benefits to their academic, emotional and social development. At Blackburn the Redeemer we feel the introduction of a school dog will be a beneficial addition to the therapeutic and nurture provisions we already provide.

Working with animals can:

- Enable children to put our school values into practice; from friendship, love, community. Teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills
- Help develop social skills
- Support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system, reducing anxiety
- Increase motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes
- Decrease children's anxiety behaviours
- Enhance relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive regard from the dog. This in turn can help children to learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships

Guidelines and Expectations

- Treacle is owned by and lives with Miss Ross, as such all veterinary care and necessary costs for caring for Treacle will be the responsibility of Miss Ross
- Treacle is a spoodle, spoodles are known to: be low/non-shedding and therefore non-allergenic for people with allergies; have a great temperament and a friendly demeanour; be a breed recognised as one that makes a good therapy dog and a good companion; and keen to please.
- 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 and which areas of the school the dog will be based in.
- Any staff, visitors and children who have a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with the dog. With consent, a pupil may receive structured support in a controlled environment with the dog to help them overcome their fears.
- The dog 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

- If the dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school. The responsibility of arranging care for the dog at home during these times will be Miss Ross.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Children will not be allowed near the dog when he is sleeping, eating or in the offices (Treacle's safe spaces)
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Children will be reminded not to put their face near to the dog's or to allow the dog to lick their faces.
- Children will be reminded not to feed the dog food that is meant for human consumption. The dog will not be allowed to enter the school kitchen or go into the hall during meal times.
- Children will be reminded to wash their hands after playing with the dog and/or handling him.
- Staff working with the dog shall ensure that children are aware of the behavioural signs from the dog are understood;
 - 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 it will be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children will be encouraged to remain calm around the dog. Failure to do so will impact on their access to the dog.
- The dog will not be allowed to jump. Children will be reminded not to encourage the behaviour and will be given guidance on how to discourage the behaviour.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs must come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and SLT have been informed beforehand.
- The dog will be trained to use a designated external toileting area near the car park. Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. Should any 'accidents' occur in areas where children have access to, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.
- If the dog dies those children that have become attached to the dog will be offered counselling and suitable support will be put in place.
- The school's insurance policy covers the dog and any possible subsequent claim that may be made.
- Children whose parents/guardians have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog well-being sessions.

Equal Opportunities

The staff at St Stephen's Tockholes are committed to the realisation of each child's maximum potential academically and in their social and emotional development. We endeavour to ensure that all children have equal access to therapeutic support, that all children are given equal opportunities and that wherever possible resources are appropriate and relevant to the needs of the child. We uphold our statutory duty to

promote equality and equity for all children and families and in particular, protected groups in the Equality Act 2010. All members of the school are treated as individuals with a recognition that to achieve real equity we cannot treat every child the same. We aim to meet the needs of all, taking account of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, special educational needs, disability, and social circumstances.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy and risk assessment and this is reviewed bi-annually and in response to any incidents associated with the well-being dog.
- The Head of School is responsible for implementing this policy and may delegate this responsibility to the SLT team
- All pupils, staff, parents, governors and other visitors in school are required to abide by this policy.
- Health and Safety advice and guidance will be sought and reviewed annually.

Version	Date Created	Owner	Date Adopted by Staff & Governors
1	January 2021	G. Ross	March 2022 Reviewed January 2024 Reviewed January 2026