

## Annex A – School Dog (Bailey)

### 1. Rationale

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Reading Dogs are being used to help children develop fluency in reading and Therapy Dogs provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues.

Increasingly in schools, it is becoming recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom.

A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children with trouble managing their behaviour could learn to care for the dog and the dog could be helpful in de-escalating anger. Reading dogs can help boost children's confidence and fluency. Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion.



Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

### 2. Preparations for having a School Dog

School leaders have prepared guidance about the necessary risk assessments and insurance is in place, as well as practical guidance to have a School Dog onsite. Miss Kiernan has worked with a school dog for a number of years and understands the body language of her dog to ensure the dog is comfortable and safe at all times. If the dog showed any signs of stress interactions would be stopped.

Toilet area is designated off the school site away from all school areas.

In order to ensure that the dog would be beneficial to learning and wellbeing and not be a distraction, we will plan when and where interactions with the dog will take place. Parents will give written agreement for direct interactions with the dog. If any child is allergic to dog hair we make sure that they don't come into contact with the dog, or have restricted contact (School Dog is hypoallergenic) if parents request it.

Likewise, if a child has a phobia of dogs we will keep the dog away from them, or we can offer opportunities to be slowly introduced to the dog, to reduce their fear. Parents are invited to contact the Headteacher if either of these cases apply, so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

### 3. Dog Background

Our school dog is Bailey, who is also Miss Kiernan's family pet. Bailey is a Cavachon and was born on April 2015. His breed was selected due to its low moulting and calm, loving disposition. Bailey was then chosen as an example of the breed who seemed calm and confident enough to work with children with disabilities. Bailey had lots of early socialisations, went on shopping trips, camping and doggy play dates at an early age. He has regular check-ups at the vet and has updated vaccinations, flea and worming treatment.

### 4. Interactions

Whilst Bailey is an experienced and mature dog interactions need to be carefully planned through the day when he is in school to make sure he does not become stressed or over tired.

#### **Guidelines on how to interact with the School Dog**

Parents/ carers are informed that there is a school dog and can request that their children don't have contact with the dog. There will always be a responsible adult in charge of the dog during interactions with children. Children and adults are required to adhere to the following;

- Always approach the school dog calmly and slowly
- Never run up to the dog
- Offer the back of your hand for the dog to sniff when meeting the dog
- All interactions must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times
- Children must wash their hands after they have been stroking the dog.

### 5. Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What will the school dog do on a day to day basis?**

The dog would be based in Miss Kiernan's office but will have a timetable of interactions. The dog may visit different classes to listen to readers or help with particular projects, such as learning about caring for animals. The dog will always be kept on a lead, unless contained in the Head's office.

#### **How do I know that my child will be safe around the dog?**

A risk assessment and policy will be in place and will be available on the school website. The school has insurance to cover having a dog on the school site. Children will only have contact with the dog when supervised by an adult. When moving around the school, the dog will always be on the lead. Children will have an appropriate social story and communication aids to help them interact safely with school dog.

**Will my child pick up infections from the dog?**

The dog will be fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and will be kept away from the school if it is ill. Children will be required to wash their hands after handling the dog. There will be a dedicated dog toilet area away from areas that children access, and no child will be asked to pick up dog mess.

**What if my child is allergic to dogs or afraid of them?**

Parents can request that their child has no contact, or restricted access to the dog in these situations. Please speak to Miss Kiernan to discuss any concerns.