



## Therapy Dog Policy

### Introduction:

Templederry National School would like to introduce the use of a therapy dog into our school community. Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. This policy is designed to set out to students, staff, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog. While there is a risk in bringing a dog into the school environment, this can be mitigated against with a risk assessment to ensure the safety of all student, staff and visitors.

### The benefits of a school dog:

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student's understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills.

### Animal assisted therapy can:

- Teach empathy and interpersonal skills
- Help pupils develop social skills
- Be soothing and support the development of social skills and relationship building
- Therapy dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation
- Therapy dogs are being used to support children with social, behavioural and emotional learning needs which can in turn assist with literacy development

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance
- Gains in confidence
- Decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learner outcomes
- Positive changes towards learning and improved motivation
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive regard from a therapy dog. This in turn helps a pupil learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

### Confidence Benefits

*'If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience'*

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>

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## AEN Benefits

*'Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with children with additional needs by giving focus and providing a calming environment'*

*Therapy Dogs Nationwide <https://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>*

## Behaviour Benefits

*'Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating pupils declined by 55% and general aggression went down 62%. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers and students showed more confidence and responsibility.'*

*Hazel Oak School Dog Policy*

<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>

## Guiding Principles

- The Board of Management has agreed to the presence of a therapy dog in Templederry National School.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted unless the Principal has approved their visit.
- The Therapy dog is a Goldendoodle. This cross-bred has been selected for its temperament, reduced risk of congenital health issues and hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat
- A risk assessment has been carried out and this will be reviewed annually.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of trained staff members.
- The dog will be covered by the school's Public Liability Insurance Policy. The dog is also fully insured with pet insurance by Mr Brian Boyle.
- Staff, parents and students will be informed that a dog will be in school.
- Only staff trained to handle the dog will have permission to do so. Whilst in training, this will be limited to selected members of staff with prior agreement.

## Code of Conduct:

- Mr Boyle/ Mrs. Sheehy will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- If the dog is ill, she will not be allowed into school.
- Mr. Boyle is responsible for ensuring the training of the dog which will be carried out by My Canine Companion – the providers of the dog.
- The therapy dog must be kept on a lead when moving around the school.
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult

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supervision at all times

- Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate school behaviour before any interaction with the school therapy dog.
- As our Therapy dog is a working dog in Templederry NS, all staff and pupils will be reminded of not distracting the dog while it is working, supporting children or in training.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor the situation. If the dog displays any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his ears then he should be immediately removed from that situation.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Records and anecdotal evidence of work and impact of the school dog will be maintained.

## Pupil Responsibilities:

- Pupils should be careful to strike (rub) the dog on his body, chest, back and not by his face or the top of her head.
- Pupils are not allowed to approach or disturb the dog while he is sleeping or eating,
- Pupils are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Pupils must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
- Pupils are only allowed to eat around the dog when he is crated securely.
- Pupils must always wash their hands before and after stroking or handling the dog.
- Pupils understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will not be tolerated and will be addressed through the Code of Behaviour.
- Review and Ratification

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Templederry National School on

\_\_\_\_\_ and will be reviewed annually or as the need arises.

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A Risk Assessment



## Introduction:

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.

The rationale behind the decision to get a therapy dog was as follows:

- For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
- To have a pet that the children could interact with and also be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with the dog is invited to inform the principal of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with the puppy as his vet will be responsible for vaccinations, including rabies and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of Tommy's health records will be updated and kept in school. Tommy will also be insured.

KEY: 1- Low risk

2

3 -Medium risk of injury

4

5-High risk of injury

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.  Child scratched by dog.  Child bitten by dog.	1  3  3	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.  Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.  The dog will always be on a lead or carried when they are not in their designated school area while the children are in school.  Pupils have been and will continue to be	

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			<p>taught about the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and SPHE sessions.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them even while on the lead.</p> <p>The dog will undergo formal training from January '24 with an experienced dog trainer from the charity providers of the dog, My Canine Companion. Selected Children may be part of this process on school grounds.</p> <p>Risk of scratching and biting will reduce, and the risk assessment will be reviewed as he progresses through his weekly training.</p> <p>All staff have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog is up to date with all their vaccinations and immunization shots. He will attend the vets regularly to ensure he is in good health and that his claws are kept short.</p>	
The dog causing allergies.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will be kept in school.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog</p>	

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			<p>The Therapy dog is a Goldendoodle. This cross bred has been selected for its temperament, reduced risk of congenital health issues and hypoallergenic, non-shedding.</p>	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way.</p> <p>He will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at regular intervals as guided by the vet.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed to roam freely in classrooms at school mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.</p>	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the Lola's day to day upkeep or medical bills.	1	<p>The dog is ultimately the responsibility of Mr. Boyle and Mrs Sheedy in a well-being and general care aspect and Templederry NS from a financial outlay aspect. This was ratified by the BOM meeting on 13/12/24</p> <p>The dog is covered by pet insurance and will also be covered by the school, for Public Liability Insurance.</p> <p>All vets' costs are incurred by the school and will be claimed back if possible, through the pet insurance. If the dog needs surgery or treatment outside of the ordinary by the vet, the school will be able to claim a large portion of this cost back through their Allianz Pet Insurance policy.</p> <p>My Canine Companion (the Registered dog charity overseeing the scheme) are providing puppy training and support to</p>	

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