



Stonehouse Park Federation

School Therapy Dog

Frequently Asked Questions



Q. Why have a school dog?

A. There are many benefits to having a school dog, including: a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties, improved behaviour and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem, encouraging expression and participation in more withdrawn children.

Q. What does the school dog do?

A. The dog can help the children relax and give them confidence reading aloud. She also provides emotional support for some children and time with her can be used as a reward or incentive when needed.

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

A. The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Lisa Jones. She will bear the costs associated with owning the dog at home including pet insurance. The school budget will fund public liability insurance which covers a school therapy dog as long as stringent measures are in place including a robust risk assessment.

Q. Where is the dog from?

A. The dog is a family pet who was bought as a puppy from a reputable home breeder. The dog is a Shih-Tzu/Jack Russel cross who has a good temperament and a low moulting coat to try and minimise any fur allergies.

Q. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A. Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q. Is the dog trained?

A. Indy has been trained as a family pet and assessed by 'Pets as Therapy' as suitable for work in school. She has volunteered in other schools in the past.

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

A. In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for walks around the grounds.

Q. Will the dog be a distraction to pupils' learning?

A. The dog will be kept in the Head's office to enable the dog to have more space to roam when she is not working. She may spend time with other staff who will support in caring for the school dog when she is working.

Q. What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog?

A. The dog will be kept in the Head's Office and staff will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact with her. A child will not be forced to be in contact with the dog at any time against their wishes. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this using evidence based interventions such as graded exposure.

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

A. The dog's welfare will be carefully monitored. The dog will be walked daily and given free time outside of sessions to rest and play. The dog will have appropriate access to food, treats, water and toys.

Q. How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A. Children will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. She will be regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

