

## *St Mary's Catholic Primary School - Dog Risk Assessment (September 2024)*



### ***Introduction***

St Mary's School Dog lives with our Head of School, Mrs McCall, and her family which includes three lively children! She is a very caring and well behaved puppy who has the right temperament to become a real asset to St Mary's. Bella is a King Charles Cavalier Spaniel - a breed which is well-known for being loving, caring, loyal and wonderful with children.

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.

**Review Date: April 2024**

## **Background**

The senior leadership team considered the options regarding the possibility of obtaining a dog as a school pet in March 2024. Over a period of time following this decision, much research into a possible source of a suitable puppy led to the final decision to introduce a puppy in September 2024.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

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

Prior to purchasing the puppy, Mrs McCall visited the home of the dog's parents to ensure that the temperament of the parents was suitable for interaction with children. The puppy lives with Mrs McCall and her family in her home, including three lively children and will be introduced to the school environment and the children gradually. A local veterinarian practice thoroughly checked the puppy for any illnesses and is responsible for her vaccination programme. There are no diseases that could be caught from the puppy as she will be kept up to date with immunisations and her worming and flea treatment is in line with European vet guidelines. Both the school and vets' surgery will keep a register of her annual health check.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not wish their child to interact with the puppy is invited to inform the school of their wishes.

This risk assessment will be reviewed annually and the school senior leadership team will evaluate the impact of a school dog on a regular basis.

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5	Likelihood	Controls in place	Date and signed
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to ground	1	2	<p>King Charles Cavaliers are a small breed of dog, smaller than all children in school. The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises. Children are not left with the dog unsupervised. The dog will always be on a lead when she is out of her pen/ the office. Dog's Trust are booked to come in to school in October 2024 to do whole school dog safety training in preparation. Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to whole school during assemblies, through Picture News and PSHE lessons.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still, cross arms, turn back on dog) The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school classroom environment, this area of training with allow future reading or nurture intervention to involve the school dog in a calming/therapeutic manner. ALL staff have been introduced to the dog and the expectations (does and don't) of having a school dog.</p>	
	Child scratched by Dog	1	2		
	Child bitten by Dog	5	1		
Gets loose from her pen or from her lead.	As above	1	2	The dog's crate/space is big enough for her to be happy and safe during the school day and replicates the crate she is used to in her home. The children are taught not to tease her. If the dog does get loose from her pen the teacher on duty will call for a designated	

				<p>staff member who will come and put the dog back in her pen. There are five members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if she needs attention at any other time, they are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mrs Sarah McCall</li> <li>2. Miss Molly McHale</li> <li>3. Miss Danielle Cunningham</li> <li>4. Mrs Hayley Murray</li> <li>5. Miss Emily Walker</li> </ol>	
Dog hair causing allergies	Children have allergic reactions	1	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept on the school recording system. 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. Children have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.</p>	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children/ staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	1	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 manner. The dog will be trained to toilet in an area near school that our pupils don't have access to on a regular basis. If required, the area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant. All immunisations are kept up to date and the Head of School keeps a register of this. Flea treatment is carried out at 4-6 weekly intervals. Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet</p>	

				guidelines, at 6 monthly intervals The dog will not go in the school dining hall at meal times; she will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen.	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep	School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dog's day to day upkeep or medical bills	1	1	The dog is the responsibility of Mrs McCall, she is financially responsible for her care and day-to-day costs. The dog is the responsibility of Mrs McCall inside and outside of school hours.	

KEY: 1- Low risk 2 3 -Medium risk of injury 4 5-High risk of injury