



Nursery Dog Policy (and FAQ) both shared with parents

Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a Nursery environment?

Yes there is, though there are a variety of accidents, which can happen within the Nursery environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out. Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Nursery Manager. When completing risk assessments, we consider if the benefit outweighs the risk and due to the integration plan, socialisation and training measures put in place, we consider the Nursery dog to be very low risk. We also believe the benefits by far outweigh the risk.

About the Nursery dog:

The dog will be owned by Sam

Her name is Millie.

Her birthday was 7th November 2022

And she is a Cocker Spaniel.

Millie has come from a local breeder, and from her mum's third and final litter. She was bred in a loving home with young children around her. She also adores Sam's two boys, a young nephew and a young niece so is already used to young children.



- Staff, parents and children will be informed by letter that a dog will be in Nursery and then surveyed by an electronic form to capture information / concerns at an individual level.
- The Nursery has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually. This will also be shared with parents and a consent form returned.
- This policy will be shared with parents when we introduce the dog, as well as the FAQ's and parents will have opportunity to meet Millie.
- 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 Nursery.
- If the dog is unwell she will not be allowed into Nursery.
- Millie will be upstairs and not left to roam the setting freely, unless it reaches a point when Millie is fully matured and trained where we feel it is safe to allow her. Parents will be consulted prior and the risks will be assessed fully.
- Millie will not be fully integrated until she is 12 months old to fully assess her temperament.
- Children will be introduced to Millie upstairs in a calm and quiet environment on a very small ratio, and always at consent of the child and parents.
- Once Millie is established and used to the children and her environment the children will be able to ask to come upstairs to visit Millie, however not whilst the staff are upstairs on their lunch break.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between rooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a supervising adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behavior around the dog
- Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Everyone must wait until Millie is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking her.
- 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 s/he monitors the situation.
- Millie will never be downstairs when children are eating, and never in the food preparation areas.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children's access to the dog.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of supervising adults.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless the Nursery Manager has been informed beforehand.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The registered person, Sue Tredell, was involved in the consultation of a Nursery dog and gave consent for us to go ahead. Sam McCann, the Nursery Manager, is responsible for writing a policy and risk assessment, consulting with staff and parents and sharing these document with all involved. We will ensure parents voices and concerns are listened to and respected. Staff, children, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy. The Nursery curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Appendix 1. Reasons to have a dog in school

Appendix 2. School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Appendix 1.

Reasons to have a dog in Nursery:

In a nutshell..."Helping family care for a dog can help young kids feel like they're part of the team. They may feel empowered when they see that they're able to help care for an animal by helping feed or walk the dog. They may also feel better about themselves when they are able to help with the responsibilities of caring for a pet." – AMY MORIN, LCSW

Academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the Nursery environment can achieve the following:

1. Support early years development
2. Promote calming behaviours and an incentive for positive behaviours
3. Increase social skills and self-esteem - At a time when children are finding their way in the world and likely experiencing their first difficult relationships, a dog who's always happy to see them can provide a much-needed self-esteem boost.
4. Positive relationships with pets can aid in the development of trusting relationships with others. A good relationship with a pet can also help in developing non-verbal communication, compassion, and empathy.
5. Increase confidence around animals and less likely to develop a fear of dogs
6. Teach responsibility and respect to all life
7. Studies have found that babies raised in close contact with a pet get sick less often in their first year of life, meaning fewer visits their GP. Exposure to pet dander and the microbes that pets carry into the home from the outdoors is suggested to improve babies' developing immune systems.
8. A dog will help motivate children, this will help develop their concentration and focus ready for formal learning at School.
9. A dog will provide comfort and security for children who are experiencing, or have experienced domestic abuse
10. Researchers say interactions with dogs help reduce stress hormone levels in children. Experts say dog ownership can also help teach children about responsibility and social interaction
11. A Nursery dog will have a positive impact on children who are requiring support with their speech and language as dogs are great listeners and they don't judge or demonstrate they do not understand you. For example there is a lot of research about the benefits of children being able to read a story and share a book with a dog.
12. By having a Nursery dog we believe this will increase the physical activity of children, and have a purpose to be out in the local community for local walks. This will support not only the children's mental health but all the well being of staff.

Appendix 2

Nursery Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

The legal owner of the dog will be Sam McCann; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a breeding home where the mother and siblings were seen and has been specifically chosen for its breed and temperament. The dog has been bred in a family home and around young children.

Q Will the dog be a distraction for staff?

The dog will be kept upstairs and will have free roam of the office and staff room. She also has her own crate in Sam's office and she is already crate trained so likes having this safe space. The space will be separate from the play rooms downstairs to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in other areas where children can interact safely. The dog may also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

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 Who is responsible for training?

Sam will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Millie has been trained by his breeder for 12 weeks and then in Sam's family home, with two primary-aged children, since that point. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a nursery dog through a local reputable company.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our Nursery dog will be toileted at the side of the bungalow where children are not allowed to play and she will always be on the lead. She will also have the opportunity of walks every day. If she was to toilet in any other area only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. She will only be in Nursery for three days a week (Wednesday-Friday) with two rest days at home. The dog will be kept upstairs in Sam's office in her crate (she is already well crate trained) and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. When she isn't resting in her crate she will have free access to the staff room and the office and a stair gate has been installed for her safety. Mille will have unlimited access to food and water, and she has her own toy basket for her to self-choose her toys, just like the children downstairs. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered. Millie will have a flexible routine and timetable where she can offer valuable nurture time to our children and staff, this will include a timetable for rest, for walks and for play.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog, 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. The dog is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. 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.

Other notes and key points

- For the next year there will be integrations and socialisation – getting used to the nursery environment. This will take place mainly upstairs, but always in a quiet and calm environment in small groups and always under close supervision.
- The dog will be mature enough to act as full well-being dog and listen to children read etc from 12 months of age (Nov 2023) From February 2023 she will have a timetable which will involve small group sessions with children during their nurture time. Rest periods and exercise will also be timetabled.

Appendix 3

**Nursery Dog - Millie
Consent and Feedback – Parent Voices**

I (parent/guardian name).....confirm I have received the Nursery dog policy and the risk assessment.

I give/do not give (please circle) permission for my child.....to meet Millie and be involved with the introduction of the dog under the conditions stated in the policy and risk assessment.

Parent/guardian signature..... Date.....

I give/do not give permission for my child..... to be involved in walking Millie with supervision of the adult. I understand my child will not be holding the lead, this will only be a member of staff.

Parent/guardian signature..... Date.....

I can confirm my child.....does not/does have an allergy to dogs.

Parent/guardian signature..... Date.....

Please use the space below to write any feedback, thoughts or concerns. Please also let us know if you have any dogs at home so we can cater the introduction of Millie to our families and children. Please also let us know if your child has experienced a negative experience of dogs which will help support and nurture.

Thank you, Sam and the Poppins staff team