



# **The Coppice Primary School**

## **Thrive Dog Policy**

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## **Introduction:**

Contact and interaction with animals has many benefits for children. They can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. In addition to these benefits, many children take simple, yet enormous pleasure from interaction with animals. At The Coppice, we have two school dogs, who supports us in bringing all these benefits to our children! Specifically, our dogs work within the Thrive department – a social and emotional development team who work closely with many pupils across our school.

## **Risks of bringing a dog into a school environment:**

There are potential risks within our everyday lives, including the school environment. Life is not about avoiding risk, but about recognising and managing those risks. In the case of our school dogs, the risk has been carefully assessed to ensure the safety of all pupils, staff and visitors.

## **Thrive dog information and policy:**

Our Thrive dogs “M” and “Oscar” are owned by Mrs Small, our Thrive practitioner. They are brought into school daily by Mrs Small.

‘M’ is a cross breed, Toy Poodle and Shih Tzu. “M” and “Oscar” both have a mild temperament and moulting is of the lowest level.

- The Headteacher, Mr Hutt, and the Chair of Trustees, Kathryn Byng, both agree to Thrive dogs working in school.
- All staff are aware that the school has two Thrive dogs.
- This document is accessible to all Parents/Carers, via the school website.
- The Thrive coordinator will review the policy and risk assessment annually.
- Any staff, visitors or pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs should notify the school for risk assessment review and should not go near the dogs.
- If the dogs are ill, they will not be allowed into school until fully recovered.
- The dogs will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dogs and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dogs are present with pupils.
- Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Pupils should remain calm around the dogs. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog’s eyes as this could be threatening for the dogs. Pupils should not put their face near the dogs and should always approach them standing up.
- Pupils should never go near or disturb the dogs if they are sleeping or eating.

- Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dogs.
- If the dogs are surrounded by a large number of pupils, the dogs could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dogs must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dogs display any of these warning signs they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not feed, or eat close to the dogs.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dogs.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately, with the affected area appropriately disinfected.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

The Board of Trustees has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for Thrive Dogs in School.

As with all policies in school the Headteacher has the overall responsibility for ensuring they are implemented. However, in practice, the responsibility for the implementation of this policy will be delegated to the Thrive Leader.

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

## **Appendix 1: Generic reasons to have a dog in school:**

**Bullying:** All schools can be affected by bullying, with pupils anxious about attending school for fear of taunting and abuse. It is important that all schools recognise this potential problem and have robust strategies for dealing with bullying and supporting pupils. Within the Thrive programme, pupils who have been unkind to others are encouraged to identify and empathise with the dogs. This, in turn, can be used to support the learning of empathy for their peers.

**Attendance:** For children with poor attendance, the school dogs can act as an incentive to come to school. Children learn about the time and dedication needed to care for a pet and are then more motivated to attend school to help meet the needs of the pet. With adult supervision, children are able to get involved in many aspects of pet care, from grooming and exercise to giving affection and playing.

**Behaviour:** Problems can occur in school and interfere with learning. The Thrive team specifically works with pupils who have social and emotional difficulties (that can often manifest in challenging behaviour). Activities involving the Thrive dogs are carefully planned and used to support and motivate these pupils.

**Reading:** Reading to dogs can support the development of reading skills. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to the dogs – after all, a dog will sit and listen, even if you make mistakes! Dogs can be used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud.

**Social Development:** Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils: social skills and responsibility; the impact of positive and negative reinforcement; responsibility and boundaries. Children who work with the Thrive dogs have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming and can help to promote their own self-care. Pupils can also develop sharing and cooperative skills when working with other pupils to ensure care of the dogs.

**Support Dogs:** The Thrive dogs can help pupils who have been bullied, abused, are going through upsetting/difficult times or are scared/phobia of dogs. The dogs will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of affection to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

**The wider community:** Dogs can be a great way to help pupils to interact with members of the wider community. For example, Pupils may take the dog to visit other schools, hospitals or care homes and help others to benefit from this therapeutic support.

## **Appendix 2 : Thrive Dog FAQs:**

### **Q: Who is the legal owner of the dogs and who pays for its costs?**

A: The legal owner of the dogs is Mrs Small (M), who will bear the costs associated with owning the dog. The school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

### **Q: Are the dogs from reputable breeders?**

A: The dogs are from a home where both parents were seen and they have been chosen for their temperament.

### **Q: Will the dogs be a distraction?**

A: The dogs will primarily be kept in the office area or Thrive room. These areas are separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure that the dogs are mainly coming into contact with children during planned Thrive or other pupil support sessions. The dogs will also have time to visit classrooms and walk outside. This will be closely supervised so that children can interact safely.

### **Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A: Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources. A risk assessment is in place and managed by the Health & Safety Administrator.

### **Q: Who is responsible for training?**

A: Mrs Small is the legal owners of the dogs and, as a result, will be responsible for training.

### **Q: How will the dogs be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dogs will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

### **Q: How will the dogs' welfare be considered?**

A: The dogs will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Pupils may accompany the dogs on these walks, under close adult supervision. The dogs are trained and have access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dogs' welfare is always considered.

### **Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A: No children will be required to touch the dogs. 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/Carers to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breeds of both dogs are known for minimal moulting, they are given high quality food and are both regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

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

A: Access to the dogs 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/Carers of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

## Data Protection Statement

The procedures and practice created by this policy have been reviewed in the light of our GDPR Data Protection Policy.

All data will be handled in accordance with the school's GDPR Data Protection Policy.

<b>Name of policy</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Reason for policy</b>	<b>Who does it relate to?</b>	<b>Where is it stored?</b>
Thrive Dog Policy	Guidelines to follow relating to the dog in Thrive	To provide clarity	Pupils & Staff	Secure Network drive

As such, our assessment is that this policy:

<b>Has Few / No Data Compliance Requirements</b>	<b>Has A Moderate Level of Data Compliance Requirements</b>	<b>Has a High Level Of Data Compliance Requirements</b>
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