



## Parklands Junior School Reading Dog Policy



### **Introduction**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having a 'Reading Dog', we want to encourage those children specifically who are vulnerable, or those who are less confident with reading, to have a friendly audience and to look forward to reading as a treat! The breed is carefully selected as suitable for this type of environment. The dog is well-cared for and responsibly owned by a staff member.

### **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

This policy shows how we have thought carefully about school life with a pet dog and how through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Wilson
- Veterinary costs will be paid by the owner
- The dog is a Kokoni Cross chosen for its very mild temperament.
- The risk assessment (attached) is reviewed annually.
- Visitors and students will be informed of the dog upon arrival

### **Management day-to-day**

The dog will:

- not be allowed into school if unwell.
- be carried or kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk
- be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times
- have had all injections prior to joining Parklands
- never be taken off the site by pupils

### **Pupils will:**

- NOT ever have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with the dog
- meet the dog in a group of no more than 3 children
- be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet him.
- Understand health and safety principles:

### **Health and Safety Principles**

Children will always wash their hands after handling the dog. Should a bite (even playful) occur:

1. Parents will be contacted immediately
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
3. The child/adult will be released for a medical attention
4. All staff will be informed

5. A full investigation into the circumstance will be led by Health and Safety coordinator.

6. The suitability of the dog will be re-assessed by the Governors.

### **Reasons to have a dog in school**

#### **Improving reading**

Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in children or as part of reading programmes. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults, are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer.

Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, children find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have children read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children, as they do not make fun of them when they read, but make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in interpersonal skills among the children they mix with.

#### **Social Development**

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. With a dog in school, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

#### **Rewards**

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who have been bullied or are experiencing upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog