

Monty the Mugginton Mutt



Rationale

Policy

Risk Assessment



Rationale

Mugginton is a small, rural school in the Peak District. We are fortunate to enjoy beautiful surroundings and access to a diverse natural environment. Celebrating the outdoors and leading a healthy, active lifestyle together with animals is central to our ethos.

Introducing dogs to educational settings is a trend that is growing in popularity. Research over the past 30 years indicates that therapy dogs can offer physiological, emotional and physical support to children (Friesen, 2010). At an empirical and anecdotal level, we believe that a dog helps children in school because of children's natural tendency to open up to animals and the stress-moderating effect of the calm and non-judgmental presence of a dog (Jalongo, Astorino & Bomboy, 2004).

For further empirical evidence of the positive impact of dogs in school please see Anderson (2006), Bassette (2013), Beetz (2013), Brelsford (2013), Friesen (2012), Hall (2016), Kropp and Shupp (2017), Ko (2017), Levinson (2017).

At Mugginton, we believe our children will benefit from having a dog in school for the following reasons:

Social Development

Dogs can have a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural, emotional or learning difficulties. We aim to encourage greater empathy (for people and animals), responsibility, expression and participation in children by giving them the opportunity to interact and care for a dog.

Self-Concept

We believe that a dog can help children to improve their self-concept as learners. By caring for a dog, motivating them to think and learn about how best to help them and encouraging their natural enjoyment of and enthusiasm for animals.

Academic Progress

Early trials with Monty demonstrate that children will read to Monty willingly. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even to adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. In addition, dogs are entirely non-judgmental – they do not correct you and offer a calm, loving and happy presence.

Day to Day School Life

A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could even be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children can learn to care for the dog; a dog is a model for children who need to learn to de-escalate feelings of anger. In a broader sense, children learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion which contributes further to our caring, family atmosphere in school.

We believe having a dog in school offers an opportunity to help nervous children to conquer fear of dogs by spending time with them and learning more about them. A serious fear of dogs could cause a child problems in their future in 21st Century Britain.

We promote an outdoor, active lifestyle and help our children to develop high levels of fitness, for example by taking them running twice a week and our half-termly school walks in the Peak District. Our school dog will join our outdoor pursuits and add an increased level of fun and excitement to everything we do.

School Dog Policy & Procedure

The introduction of a school dog requires careful planning and risk assessment. In addition, a six-week trial period has been completed in order to inform the Risk Assessment. Parent, staff and pupil voice has been collected.

Context

Monty is owned by Mrs Wallen who is the staff member with responsibility for the dog in school. Mrs Wallen will cover all veterinary costs. Monty will be in school for the hours Mrs Wallen works (0.6 FTE). The risk assessment will be reviewed annually and visitors and new pupils will be informed of the dog upon arrival.

Monty

Monty is a six-month old Golden Retriever. He lives with Mrs Wallen and her three children and was chosen because of the breed's gentle temperament and playful personality. Monty's Brother lives with an autistic child and his Father is a working therapy dog. Monty is used to young children and is not intimidated by noise or by new environments. He is the ideal school dog.

Preparatory Work

The six-week trial period was positive and extremely informative. Whilst the trial was going on, we took advice from the Dogs Trust; the Pets as Therapy website and our parent vet. The six-week trial informed the risk assessment in the following ways:

- Parents will be able to request no (or restricted) contact with Monty.
- Children with a phobia of dogs to be offered the opportunity to be introduced to Monty slowly.
- Monty will not be allowed in school if showing any signs of poor health.
- Visitors and new pupils will be informed of the dog on arrival.
- Monty will not leave the premises unless on his lead.
- A dog toilet area at the bottom of tag hole lane has been identified. Waste is always collected by the supervising member of staff or parent.
- In the unlikely event of Monty urinating or defecating in school, children are told to stay away and never to try to clean it up. Mess will be cleaned up by Mrs Wallen or the Headteacher immediately.
- A 'safe' place for Monty is identified in the classroom (his basket) and in the office when Mr Green is there.

Monty's Wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of our children and staff is our most important responsibility. In addition, Monty's health and wellbeing is very important and evidence demonstrates that poorly planned and managed animal interventions, such as dogs in schools, can lead to compromised welfare in the animal (Arhant et al, 2016). We recognise and agree with the Dogs Trust recommendation that 'the dog's physical and emotional needs are prioritised by any party wishing to use a dog for such a purpose'.

If Monty were to develop medical conditions or behavioural traits that make their attendance in school difficult for the children or the dog, Monty will be retired from his position immediately. Monty's primary attachment is his owner, Mrs Wallen. Therefore, Monty will only be in school on the days/times when Mrs Wallen is working.

Interacting with Monty the Mugginton Mutt

There will always be a responsible adult in charge of Monty during interaction with the children. Children and adults are taught to adhere to the following:

- Approach Monty calmly and slowly – never run up to him.
- Offer the back of your hand for Monty to sniff when initiating contact.
- Wash hands after stroking Monty and before eating.
- Approach Monty in groups of no more than three children.
- Not put their face near his.
- Approach Monty standing up.
- Do not feed Monty treats because this could encourage him to ‘jump up’ at visitors.
- Tell an adult immediately if they feel nervous of Monty.

Key Health and Safety Principles

- Children will always wash their hands after stroking Monty.
- Dog foul will always be cleared up and disposed of appropriately by Mrs Wallen or the Headteacher. If outside, waste will be picked up by the adult in charge.
- Should a playful bite occur:
 - 1) Parents will be contacted immediately
 - 2) Any mark/wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
 - 3) The child/adult will be released for medical attention if deemed necessary.
 - 4) A record of the incident will be taken and logged after full investigation.
 - 5) Monty will be removed from the premises until the investigation is complete.
 - 6) The suitability of having a dog in school will be reassessed by the Headteacher.

Frequently Asked Questions

What will Monty do on a daily basis?

Monty is based in the infant classroom in his basket. He has a timetable which allows him to interact with children, join interventions, listen to children read and go for walks with small groups. He is able to join both classes at certain times of the day and will have time with children who have worked particularly hard. He may help with particular topics of learning such as how to care for animals.

How do I know my child will be safe around the dog?

A full risk assessment has been carried out as part of this policy and is reviewed on an annual basis. Monty has a designated adult (his owner, Mrs Wallen) and was chosen by her because of his breed and temperament. Monty will be assessed by the Pets as Therapy team at nine months of age to gain his official ‘Therapy Dog’ status. He is fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and is kept away from school if ill. Children are required to wash their hands before lunch and after stroking Monty. There is a dedicated toilet area which children never approach and no child will ever be asked to pick up dog mess.

What if my child is allergic to dogs or afraid of them?

Parents may request that their child has no or restricted access to Monty. However, in cases where children are nervous, we will work hard with parents and children to conquer fears by support and managed interaction with Monty. Please speak to the Headteacher if you have any concerns.

Monty the Mugginton Mutt

(responsible person: Debbie Wallen)

(Potential) Risk Observed	Action to be taken	Contingency (when 'action' is insufficient)
Toileting / hygiene	DW to take Monty out before start of school, at break and lunch times.	When Monty barks/needs the toilet during lesson time, PS (or parent helper if PS unavailable) to take him out – never the teacher in charge.
Children with fear of dogs	Work with parents and the child to make sure they overcome fear by the end of their primary school career. A nervous child will be introduced to Monty and, at their own pace, encouraged to stroke him, walk with him and change his water.	If phobia remains, gradual, person desensitisation activities to be introduced after careful planning and discussion with parents and child. This may include gradual, tethered introduction in classroom etc. Consultation with qualified vet (parent)
Feeding / Hygiene	Children to wash hands before they eat and after contact with Monty. Monty removed from classroom to entrance hall when food around. DW to make sure Monty's vaccinations up to date.	N/A
Road safety, particularly first thing in the morning	Monty always on a lead, with an adult, before he goes outside. Establish a 'tether point' somewhere in the classroom and/or use the EYFS outdoor area when necessary.	If risk of Monty walking through the main door as parents arrive remains, he will be brought in later or wait in DW's car until 9am.
Distracting children	During carpet time, Monty is to be in his bed, or lying down. Carpet area must be free for children to sit and concentrate. AT child responsible for ensuring Monty goes to his bed and stays there.	If Monty does not settle, he will be removed from the classroom and put in DW's car or in the office for time out if JG is there.
'Jumping up' at children	DW responsible for Monty and continues to train Monty to avoid jumping up at anybody. Monty to be told off using agreed phrase/word should he do so. Children told not to raise their hands as Monty approaches.	If Monty still 'jumps up' at 9 months of age (currently 6 months old), additional training will be sought through vet (ST).
'Jumping up' at parents	Monty told off should he do this and parents discouraged from bringing food/treats in their pockets.	If Monty still 'jumps up' at 9 months of age (currently 6 months old), additional training will be sought through vet (ST).
Lunchtimes – Monty extremely food orientated and can bark loudly	Monty has bed moved out of the classroom into the entrance lobby. He stays there until children have eaten and are on the playground.	If Monty barks repeatedly he goes out to the Early Years area, or car for a short period. On hot days, Monty will only go to the Early Years area.
Approaching (barging through!) children on carpet	During carpet time, Monty to be in his bed, or lying down. Carpet area must be free for children to sit and concentrate.	If Monty does not settle, he will be removed from the classroom and put in

	AT child responsible for ensuring Monty goes to his bed and stays there.	DW's car or in the office for time out if JG is there.
'Barking' to go outside during class time	When Monty barks/needs the toilet during lesson time, PS (or parent helper if PS unavailable) to take him out – never the teacher in charge.	If Monty continues to be unsettled he has time out in the office (if Mr Green is in there), in the Early Years area or in DW's car.
Play-biting	The children never put their hands near Monty's mouth or raise their voices around him. Monty is never on the playground without lead & DW present.	If Monty were to start play-biting, additional advice and training will be sought through vet (ST).
Monty's suitability for school - the dog becoming stressed	If Monty does not settle or displays any 'stressed' behaviours, he will be taken out to the car, or have time out in the office, when JG alone in there. If any stress persists, his hours of work will be re-considered.	If Monty is stressed he will stop coming to school.
Licking	The children do not put their hands or face near Monty's mouth.	Additional advice and training will be sought through vet (ST).
Allergies	No recorded allergies. New pupils to be introduced to Monty and allergy information collected. If allergy is minor, children able to stroke him, but must wash hands thoroughly afterwards.	N/a
Dog health checks	Monty's certificate of vaccination will be viewed and checked by JG. He will be flea-treated each month and wormed as advised. When Monty is 9 months old, he will go through the Pets as Therapy Assessment, which will formally assess his suitability for working therapy roles.	N/A

