



HOLY TRINITY N.S., FETHARD, CO. TIPPERARY

**School Dog Risk Assessment**  
**Holy Trinity National School**  
**January 2020**

**Background**

The value of pet therapy is widely accepted as a powerful aid to communication and motivation. Research has shown that companion dogs can improve the well-being of children, reducing their anxiety levels by making the school environment happier and an even more enjoyable place to be.

Dogs are a great comfort to children who are upset in any way and in need of calming, consolation, comfort, breathing space or a distraction before being able to tell an adult what has upset them. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally; a dog can motivate and encourage their participation, increase their understanding of responsibility, develop empathy and nurturing skills and improve their behaviour and self-esteem. Children cannot fail in any way in their relationship with a dog; they do not judge or condemn and offer unconditional affection.

Children will learn the principles of good pet ownership and be taught how to handle dogs safely and responsibly; they will take great enjoyment from interaction with the dog. The staff of Holy Trinity N.S. considered the options regarding the possibility of obtaining a dog as a school pet in the Autumn term 2019. Over a period of several months following this discussion, research into a possible source of a suitable puppy led to the final decision to introduce a puppy in January 2020.

The rationale to make the decision to have a school dog was as follows:

- For the school to increase the wellbeing of students and staff
- For the children and dog to have a mutually beneficial effect on each other.
- To have a dog that the children could learn how to care for and interact safely with
- To support the social and emotional development of children in our school
- For the dog to provide a non-judgemental listener/ support to children

Prior to acquiring the puppy, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class teacher, Miss Sara Jane McGeachy, visited the home of the puppy and the dog's mother to ensure that the temperament of the puppy and its parents was suitable for interaction with children. She also researched breeds of dogs that were deemed to be easy to train, good with children and looked into the term hypoallergenic and its merits. The puppy will live with Miss McGeachy in her home at her own expense and be introduced to the school environment and the children gradually. A vets' practice local to the Miss McGeachy's home thoroughly



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checked the puppy for any illnesses and was responsible for its initial vaccination programme. There are no diseases that can be caught from the puppy as she will be kept up-to-date with immunisations including rabies, and wormed regularly in line with European vet guidelines. A register of her annual health check is kept both by Miss McGeachy and the vets' surgery. It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but that for many 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 write to inform Mrs Morrisson of their wishes. This risk assessment will be reviewed within the first six months of the introduction of the dog and then annually and the impact of a school dog will be evaluated by the staff of the school and the Board of Management.

<b>Significant Hazards and Associated Risks</b> Those hazards which may result in serious harm or affect several people	<b>Those who might be harmed</b> Persons at risk from the significant hazards identified	<b>Residual Risk Rating</b> (H / M / L)	<b>Control Measures:</b> Controls, including relevant sources of guidance and actions to be taken to minimise risks
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child/staff knocked to ground  Child/staff scratched by Dog  Child/staff bitten by Dog	L  L  M	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises unsupervised.  Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.  During the School day the dog will always be on a lead when she is out of her crate/ designated areas, except when she is undergoing structured training or is working specifically on a task, both of which will be closely supervised.  The dog will be trained not to jump up as part of her ongoing training programme.  Pupils have been, and continue to be, taught how to read dog behaviour and the impact of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children in whole school assemblies, specific workshops from



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		<p>outside professionals, including Dog's Trust, in class time and SPHE lessons.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them. (i.e. stand still with arms by their side – 'tall like a tree')</p> <p>The dog will attend the groomers regularly to make sure her claws are kept short and walked on concrete/tarmac to keep them trimmed.</p> <p>Miss McGeachy and dog will undergo formal training from the age of 12 weeks with an experienced local dog trainer.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and the expectations (do's and don'ts) of having a school dog.</p> <p>The staff will have specific training about how to treat the dog around children and how to adequately supervise the dog when completing specific tasks with children.</p>
<p>Keeping safe when Dog walking / Meet and Greet in the morning</p>		<p>A member of staff will always have school dog on the lead and have responsibility to ensure that they have control of her.</p> <p>From Junior Infants, children in small groups of 4 will walk the school dog with a member of staff to the outdoor areas and back. The member of staff always holds the lead. Children are reminded how to keep safe around the dog and are supervised at all times by the member of staff.</p> <p>The member of staff will pick up any dog poo and remind children of the importance of staff member washing hands on returning to school.</p> <p>Children will be given the choice if they would like to stroke/ brush the</p>



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			<p>school dog and or feed the dog a treat and are shown how to do this safely with a flat hand. They are reminded on returning to school to wash their hands.</p> <p>The school dog may be taken out on the lead to greet children in the morning with a member of staff and will be supervised at all times. The children are reminded of how to behave safely around the school dog and greet her calmly.</p>
The dog being a tripping hazard	Child/ staff/parent/ visitor	L	<p>All members of school community to be vigilant to look where they are walking to avoid tripping over the dog.</p> <p>The dog to be on a short lead when walking around school with a member of staff. This will improve with training.</p>
	Child/staff knocked to ground	L	<p>There are designated outdoor areas (courtyard and beside prefab). This will allow her to have some varied space throughout her day and give her a break from children or vice versa.</p>
	Child/staff scratched by Dog	L	<p>The dog's crate will be in 2<sup>nd</sup> class and another room, if another of staff wishes. The crate is big enough for her to be happy and safe in if she needs to be confined for a short period of the day.</p> <p>If the dog does get loose from a designated area or her crate the teacher on duty will call for a staff member who will come and put the dog back in a designated dog area and or in her crate.</p>
The dog gets loose from a designated area, her crate or from her lead.	Child/staff bitten by Dog	M	<p>Most members of staff can be called upon in the unlikely event of the dog getting loose or if she needs attention at any other time, and any member of staff who does not wish to do this will be asked to let us</p>



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			<p>know so that they will not be called upon.</p> <p>Geansaí will be well trained to return to her handler when called.</p>
<p>Dog hair causing allergies</p>	<p>Children/ staff have allergic reactions</p>	<p>L/M</p>	<p>The school dog is a Labrador/collie cross which is a short haired breed to reduce the chance of an allergic reaction. 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 by the Head Teacher/ Teachers and Office staff.</p> <p>Parents / Staff have been asked to highlight any allergies and a list of those who should not directly interact with the dog will be kept by the Principal / Teachers and Office staff.</p> <p>Fully supervised, 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.</p> <p>Children have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog. Wounds on exposed skin will be covered.</p> <p>Geansaí will have a thorough bathing/ brushing regime to keep allergens to a minimum.</p> <p>In the 2<sup>nd</sup> class classroom, Geansaí will have her crate beside the</p>



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			<p>window, which will be kept a little bit open. Any children with allergies will be seated away from the dog and will have no interactions if requested.</p> <p>*Many studies have been done to see if "hypoallergenic" dogs actually produce fewer allergens than other types of dogs. So far, none of these studies have found any significant difference in allergen levels between breeds. In fact, there were several instances when the allergen levels were higher in the homes of people who owned "hypoallergenic" dogs.  <a href="https://www.lovingyourlab.com/are-labs-hypoallergenic/">https://www.lovingyourlab.com/are-labs-hypoallergenic/</a></p>
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children/staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs	L	<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. Poo bags will be attached to the lead or carried by staff member walking the dog. The dog will be toileted before being allowed to move around the school to reduce the possibility of this happening.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up-to-date as advised by the vet and a register of this is kept by the Miss McGeachy.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at monthly intervals. Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet guidelines, at 3 monthly intervals.</p> <p>If the dog is sick she will not come into school until she is better.</p> <p>Children will not be allowed to touch the dog whilst eating their food.</p> <p>Children and staff will always wash their hands after touching the dog.</p>
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep	School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dog's day-to-day upkeep or medical bills	L	<p>The dog is the financial responsibility of Miss McGeachy. She is financially responsible for all her care and day-to-day costs.</p> <p>The dog is the responsibility of Miss McGeachy outside of school hours.</p>



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			<p>Dog training costs will be paid for by Miss McGeachy. The training of staff and children may incur a cost. If this is the case, then the school may pay a contribution towards these additional training costs.</p> <p>.</p>
Claim is made against school re: behaviour of the dog	School not adequately covered financially	L	<p>Miss McGeachy insures the dog's medical needs. The school holds specialist dog liability insurance and this will be renewed annually. The certificates are kept in the school office and renewed annually in January.</p>
Fire Alarm	Who has responsibility to remove dog from the building	M	<p>The dog will be signed in as a member of staff so fire marshalls know when she is onsite.</p> <p>Geansaí will be removed from building with the staff member supervising at the time.</p>
Noise / Barking	Pupils who can't cope with noise e.g. children with autism	L	<p>Labradors are bred to be sociable dogs and are often used as therapy dogs as they are known to be good with children/adults. Dog was introduced to children from an early age so is used to a noisy environment, therefore reducing the chance of her barking.</p>
Dog Phobia	Distress caused by close proximity to dog	L	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school if their child is scared to be in close contact with the dog.</p> <p>Parents are offered a programme of support for child to help overcome aversion.</p> <p>Parents also offered the option of their child having no direct interactions. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept by the Office staff, teachers and Principal.</p>



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			Visitors advised of whereabouts of dog and meetings, etc. will be held elsewhere if requested. Notice in school entrance and noted on school website.
Date completed:	January 2020		
Date to be reviewed	May 2020		