



Brickhouse Primary School

Nurture Dog Policy

Rationale

Research over many years has proved that contact and interaction with animals has many benefits for children. They can benefit educationally, emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and care for other living things as well as develop empathy and nurturing skills.

In addition to these benefits, many children take simple, yet enormous pleasure from interaction with animals. At Brickhouse Primary School, we have a school Nurture Dog, who supports us in bringing all of these benefits to our children. Specifically, our dog works within the Well-Being Hub and is a vital factor in the intervention work we provide for our children working within our Pastoral Team supporting the team with children's social and emotional development and also with our SEND children, through our school SENCO.

School fully understands that there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, and school will have suitable and regularly reviewed risk assessments to try to minimise the risks to all who are on our school premises, including the dog.

Life is not about avoiding risks, but about recognising and managing those risks. In the case of our Nurture Dog, the risk has been carefully assessed to ensure the safety of all pupils, staff and visitors at all times.

In writing the policy, school has used the research and advice from the The Dogs Trust to support a policy that meets the dog's needs and the demands placed on the dog while working in school, and ensure that the welfare of the animal is the first consideration – see Appendix 1. School has also used information from the School Therapy Dog Association, which can be found at:

www.schooltherapydog.com

Key Information

Our Nurture Dog is called Molly-Mae. She is a female Shih Tzu, and will be owned by the Headteacher and the Safeguarding, Welfare & Pastoral Support Officer. Molly-Mae will reside in their home on a day-to-day basis, during school holidays and at weekends.

Molly-Mae has been donated to them to be a domestic pet and a nurture dog in school. She comes with a full medical history breakdown, including any health concerns at the current time and potentially in the future for her specific breed, full information on the parents at time of breeding and related health concerns they may have had or currently have were given at the time of transfer.

Molly-Mae:

- has received her both her vaccinations on 12-05-21 and the 02-06-21
- has been spayed on the 03-09-21
- is insured through Petplan, under their cover for life ultimate policy, for her domestic life at home, vets bills and any accidents or injuries to her in school
- is insured through membership of the Dog's Trust for third party public liability insurance, up to £1,000,000 per claim if she causes damage or injury to another person, their property or pets
- will receive monthly treatment for worms and fleas
- will receive annual vaccinations, including Kennel Cough

Molly-Mae will be groomed every 2 – 4 weeks to ensure that she is kept in the best condition.

Molly-Mae will have regular contact and 'sleepovers' with her dog-sitters'. This is to ensure that in the event of an emergency in her main household then Molly-Mae will not need to be placed in kennels with unfamiliar people and in an unfamiliar setting.

All staff current and future will be aware that the school has a Nurture Dog and the purpose of the role the Nurture Dog has working in our school.

The Shih Tzu breed has been thoroughly researched and is of a mild temperament, which is as hypoallergenic as possible with a minimum amount of moulting.

The Nurture Dog Co-ordinator, will review the Nurture Dog Policy and appropriate Risk Assessments with the Headteacher and Site Manager at least annually, or if and when the need arises.

When the Headteacher and/or Safeguarding, Welfare & Pastoral Support Officer leave Brickhouse Primary School then Molly-Mae will also leave school and be solely their family pet.

This policy will be accessible to all stakeholders, and primarily parents, via the school website and via a paper version if requested to suit the needs of the parent.

Full information about the Nurture Dog's breed and what fun she has in school will be via "Hello, I'm Molly-Mae, The Nurture Dog" icon on the school website. Regular 'pup-dates' will also be given on the school website and displayed on the school notice boards.

Procedures

Any staff, visitors or pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs will notify the school for a Risk Assessment Review and should not go near the dog. This will be done through a simple questionnaire, and form part of our induction packages for all of the above.

On annual basis, all parents and staff will be asked to consent to them accessing the dog. Any member of staff and child that opts out of working with or being part of the dog's routine will be recorded to ensure that they do not come into contact with the dog.

Warning signs that there is a Nurture Dog in residence on the school premises will be clearly visible at all entrances, school notice boards and the room the Nurture Dog is in.

A 'carry round' sign will be placed outside the room, office or classroom when the Nurture Dog is inside that room. This sign will move around the building with the Nurture Dog and be removed when no longer in that area.

The room the dog is working in must have the door shut at all times and care must be taken when entering or leaving the room where the dog is.

A First Aid Kit and Walkie-Talkie must be available in the room the dog is working in to ensure a First Aider can be contacted in an emergency.

A dog cleaning kit will also travel around with the dog to ensure that should a toileting accident occur it can be cleaned up immediately. Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately, with the affected area appropriately disinfected.

All dog waste will be subject to hazardous waste disposal, i.e. waste double bagged in yellow biohazard waste bag and then place directly into the outside bins. It will be the responsibility of the dog handler at the time to clean up and dispose of any dog waste.

A Nurture Dog File will be kept in the School Office and one in The Well-Being Hub containing a postcard with the Nurture Dog's microchip number; the vets contact details and emergency contact details.

In the event of a fire, the dog will be taken out of the nearest exit by their current handler. The dog and handler will have their own assembly point at least 10m away from all other staff and children to ensure the dog does not come into contact with any staff, visitors or children who have not consented to be with the dog or who are allergic or have phobias.

Situated in the Well-Being Hub will be a dog First Aid Kit and a spare lead and collar. A 'Doggy Bag' containing a small water bowl, a fresh bottle of water, treats, door sign, poop bags, disposable gloves, hand sanitiser, small toys.

Other daily equipment required for the Nurture Dog will be:

- two dog beds, one to remain in the Pastoral Hub and one as a spare.
- water and food bowls
- a lead
- a blanket
- a cooling pad for the Summer.

If the Nurture Dog is ill, she will not be allowed into school until fully recovered.

If the Nurture Dog is not wanting to carry out its work because she is "out of sorts", then she will be given time to relax that day and not continue her work.

The Nurture Dog 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 at all times. Staff and visitors will understand that when the Nurture Dog is on a lead they are a 'working support dog' and cannot be 'petted'. Thus to minimise the risk of the temperament of Molly-Mae. Staff may be permitted to pet Molly-Mae when she is taken off the lead in the Well-Being Hub.

Under no circumstances will any child or group of children be left alone with Molly-Mae and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when Molly-Mae is present supporting the child/children.

All children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the Nurture Dog, when supporting them and around the school building.

This is as follows, children:

- should remain calm around the Nurture Dog.
- should not make sudden movements around the Nurture Dog.
- must never stare into the Nurture Dog's eyes as this could feel 'threatening' for the dog even if not intended.
- should not put their face near to the Nurture Dog.
- should always approach the Nurture Dog standing up.
- should never go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping, eating or off its lead.

If the Nurture Dog is surrounded by a large number of children, this could be a reason that a dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore; the adult in charge of the Nurture Dog must ensure that they monitor the situation.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language, 'growling' or 'baring of teeth' could indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. 'Flattened ears', 'tail lowered' or between their legs, 'hiding' behind their owner or 'whining' are signs that a dog is frightened or nervous. If Molly-Mae is displaying any of these warning signs she will be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children will not feed, or eat close to the Nurture Dog.

Molly-Mae will be given regular breaks with walks with a run around off the lead incorporated. If for any reason, the Nurture Co-ordinator is unable to walk Molly-Mae then the Pastoral Support Mentor will provide the walk and the break for Molly-Mae. If she is unavailable, then our Headteacher will perform the role.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written Nurture Dog Policy in school and appropriate risk assessments, which have been created with appropriate support

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 Nurture Dog Policy will be delegated to the Nurture Dog Coordinator. The Site Manager & Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required to ensure the safety of all including the dog in school.

Role of 'Molly-Mae' the Nurture Dog in School

Pastoral Therapy Dog

To help improve and support the emotional well-being of children. The Pastoral Team specifically work with pupils who have social and emotional difficulties, that can often manifest in challenging behaviour or displays of struggling emotional behaviour. The Pastoral Team will ensure that activities involving the Nurture Dog are carefully planned and used to support and motivate these children. Support from Behaviour Manager re; a child's behaviour will also be sought prior to support from the Nurture Dog in Intervention Sessions. If a child's behaviour is viewed to have a potential negative impact on the dog then they will not have access to the dog.

SEND Support Dog

To be an 'Animal Assisted Therapist' to use the Nurture Dog's "voice" to create opportunities for the child/children to identify areas in the Nurture Dog's behaviour that is similar to their own and how by working together positive changes can be made for example; with Autistic Children, plus many more!

The Nurture Dog's Voice

A 'Dog's Voice' helping individual children. The Nurture Dog (and adult) can develop similar life stories in parallel with various children with specific emotional, developmental and disability needs and can communicate with the child through letters, postcards, school blogs on the Nurture Dogs area on the website.

Social Development

A Nurture Dog in school can offer an opportunity for improving social development. A Nurture Dog can be especially useful for teaching children: social skills and responsibility, the impact of positive and negative reinforcement and behaviour, responsibility and boundaries and rule setting. Children who work with the Nurture Dog have the opportunity to learn how to care for an animal and learn how to take care of their own personal hygiene! Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a Nurture Dog.

Attendance Dog

To improve the school's attendance numbers. All schools have some children who find it difficult to get to school on time. The Nurture Dog can motivate children to attend school using a meet and greet and a transition process. Also children can learn about the time and dedication it takes to care for a pet and routines and organisation to prevent lateness.

Bullying

Children who have been unkind to others are encouraged to identify and empathise with the Nurture Dog. This, in turn, can be used to support the learning of empathy for their peers and give a clear understanding of what it is like to be the child being bullied. If a child's behaviour is viewed to have a potential negative impact on the dog then they will not have access to the dog.

Reading Buddy

Will boost the children's motivation to read and their confidence in their own reading ability. Reading to a Nurture Dog can support the development of the child's 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 a Nurture Dog, after all, a dog will sit and listen, even if you make mistakes! A Nurture Dog can be used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud.

Whole School Themed Weeks

A Nurture Dog can instigate a variety of different themed weeks and provide a stimulus for all sorts of topic areas. Planning and Advice to support from the Curriculum Manager.

Fundraising Buddy

The Nurture Dog can lead and be the face of fundraising events to encourage Parents to attend and engage with school. Fundraising Co-ordinator will hold a

specific fundraising event annually in school to support Molly-Mae physical and intellectual development in school, so that children have a clear understanding that pets/Nurture Dogs come with financial responsibilities.

Support Dogs

The Nurture Dog can help pupils who have been bullied, abused, are going through upsetting or difficult times or are scared or have a phobic of dogs. The Nurture Dog will bring much joy and help to all children they meet and Molly-Mae being a Shih Tzu is more than happy to provide plenty of affection to children they are spending time with.

The Wider Community

A Nurture Dog can be a great way for children to help and to interact with members of the wider community. For example, children may take the Nurture Dog to visit other schools, hospitals or even the care home on the Brickhouse Estate. Molly-Mae will be helping others with the children of our school to benefit from this therapeutic support.

Date: September 2025

Review: September 2026

Nurture Dog FAQs

Q Who is the legal owner of the Molly-Mae the Nurture Dog and who pays for her costs?

A The legal owner of the Molly-Mae are Paul and Carla Newby and they will bear the costs associated with owning Molly-Mae. Any costs for the dog being at school i.e. items the dog might need or any damage the dog might cause in school, will be taken out of school fund, from a pot of money raised on an annual basis to support Molly-Mae's care.

Q Is the Nurture Dog from a reputable breeder?

A Molly-Mae is from a home where both parents were seen and has been chosen specifically to be a Nurture Dog in school with children for her specific Shih Tzu breed temperament.

Q Will the Nurture Dog be a distraction?

A Molly-Mae will primarily be kept in the Pastoral Hub Office or in the Pastoral Breakout Hub Office. These areas are separate from the classrooms and playground areas to ensure that Molly-Mae will only come into contact with children during planned interventions sessions

Other child/children supported SEN Interventions will be in the Leadership Hub or Success Centre.

Molly-Mae will also have time to visit children in their classrooms under the supervision and to walk outside for her exercise. All of the above will be closely supervised so that children can interact safely with Molly-Mae at all times.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, Our Site Manager has worked with SIPs Health & Safety to consider all aspects and risks of having a Nurture Dog in school. The Nurture Dog Co-ordinator has completed extensive research into schools with Therapy Dogs as well as many different breeds of dogs to ensure that a Shih Tzu dog is one of the safest dogs to work with and be around children to minimise risks.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A The legal owners of Molly-Mae will be responsible for training Molly-Mae to meet the needs of a Nurture Dog working in school. Only when Molly-Mae is ready will she start to work with the children in school. Molly will also be required to have a formal certificated training to meet school's risk assessment and insurance needs. She will receive this via the Dog's Trust and she will also receive additional training as and when required.

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene, Molly-Mae will be toileted using her 'Puppy Training Pads' and when she is taken out for short walks on the Brickhouse Estate Playing Field with all messes appropriately cleared and placed in appropriate Dog Poop Bags and Dog Bin.

In the event of a toileting accident within the school grounds inside or outside only the Supervising Staff Members responsible for Molly-Mae at the time will clear any mess away appropriately, leaving no trace on the ground and thoroughly cleaning the area with hypoallergenic disinfectant.

All dog waste on school grounds will be subject to hazardous waste disposal, i.e. waste double bagged in yellow biohazard waste bag and then place directly into the outside bins. It will be the responsibility of the dog handler at the time to clean up and dispose of any dog waste.

Q How will the Nurture Dog's welfare be considered?

A Molly-Mae will work with children for no longer than 15 minutes per session (1 hour) primarily and introduced to children at Molly-Mae's own pace. Molly-Mae will be walked regularly and given free time outside for 10-15 minutes per 90 minute sessions with one of the named Supervising Staff Members.

Molly-Mae will rest and play with her toys for 45 minute sessions. Children may sometimes accompany the Nurture Dog on these walks, under close adult supervision if part of the child's interventions.

Molly-Mae will be trained and have access to reward treats and water at all times wherever she is working and resting in school. Staff will work carefully to ensure that Molly-Mae's health, welfare and emotional well-being is always considered first and foremost when in and out of school!

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A No Staff, children or visitors to school will be required to touch Molly-Mae without the permission of the Nurture Dog Co-ordinator to minimise any health and safety risks.

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 Shih Tzu breed of Molly-Mae is known for no moulting and is hypoallergenic.

Molly-Mae is given high quality food with advice from her Vets Practice and is washed and groomed daily by her owners to reduce any possibility of other allergens being carried by her into school.

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

A Access to the Nurture Dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with Molly-Mae unless permission for this has been given and that an activity involving Molly-Mae and a child/children is carefully and thoroughly planned for. 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. An extremely slow introduction to Molly-Mae with any child will be introduced a little at a time.

School will be committed to engaging with parents' to alleviate their worries or concerns regarding a Nurture Dog being in school. If any Parents' wish for their child not to work closely with Molly-Mae we will respect the Parents' wishes however; a child will not be removed from a class setting if Molly-Mae is working with all children in the year group and this will be clearly discussed with Parents prior to the class sessions involving Molly-Mae.

All parents will be notified that school now have a Nurture Dog and clearly informed of the role that Molly-Mae has within Brickhouse Primary School.