

Risk assessment form

Name of assessor	Lisa Sprigmore (Headteacher)	Date	01.06.2026
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Activity being assessed	Pets As Therapy Dog in School – working with individual and small groups of selected children
Rationale	The value of pet ‘therapy’ is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. There are also benefits seen in pupils’ willingness to learn and participate and increased positive social interactions and behaviour through a shared responsibility. Well-being ‘school-based’ dogs offer a variety of benefits to pupils, including improved emotional well-being, enhanced social skills, and increased academic motivation. They can help reduce stress and anxiety, foster empathy and responsibility, and even improve reading skills. In addition to this, pupils will benefit in the following areas: Improved Emotional Well-being: • Reduced Stress and Anxiety: Interacting with PAT dogs can lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone) and increase oxytocin (the feel-good hormone), leading to a calming effect and reduced anxiety. • Increased Happiness and Mood: The presence of a PAT dog can create a more positive and enjoyable environment, improving overall mood and fostering a sense of well-being. • Greater Sense of Security and Comfort: For some pupils, especially those with anxiety or emotional difficulties, the presence of a PAT dog can provide a sense of security and comfort, making them feel safer and more relaxed. Enhanced Social Skills: • Increased Social Interaction: PAT dogs can act as icebreakers, encouraging students to interact with each other and build relationships. • Improved Communication Skills: Interacting with a dog can help pupils develop their communication skills, including learning to express their feelings and understand social cues. • Development of Empathy and Compassion: Pupils can learn to understand and respond to the needs of the dog, which can translate into greater empathy and compassion towards others. Increased Academic Motivation and Performance:

	• Improved Reading Skills: Studies have shown that therapy dogs can improve reading fluency and motivation, as pupils may feel less pressure reading to a dog than to a teacher or peer. • Enhanced Executive Functioning Skills: Working with PAT dogs can stimulate memory, problem-solving skills, and attention span, all of which are important for academic success. • Increased Motivation to Learn: The presence of a PAT dog can create a more positive and engaging learning environment, making pupils more motivated to participate in class and complete tasks. Other Benefits: • Reduced Absenteeism: Pupils may be more likely to attend school when they know they will have the opportunity to interact with a PAT dog • Improved Behaviour: In some cases, therapy dogs have been shown to reduce aggressive behaviour and improve overall behaviour in the classroom. • Stronger Teacher-Student Relationships: Interacting with a PAT dog can create a positive and relaxed atmosphere, fostering better relationships between teachers and students.
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What is the hazard?	Who might be harmed?	How might people be harmed?	Existing risk control measures	Risk rating			Additional controls	New risk rating (Residual)			Action/monitored by whom?	Action/monitored by when?
				L	C	R		L	C	R		
Lottie getting over excited when interacting with children	Children	Child being scratched/nipped by Lottie	Teresa (Lottie's owner / trainer) and a member of school staff are always with Lottie when she is with the children Lottie will always be on a lead when she comes into school. Lottie will work with the children in the Nurture Room. Children are encouraged to be calm and quiet when moving around the school.	3	3	9	Mrs Biles accompanies the children to their session and asks the children to sit on the soft chairs before the session starts Teresa leads the session	2	2	4	Teresa and Mrs Biles to ensure that both the children are calm	At the beginning of the session and throughout

			Lottie has been trained not to jump up or mouth the children. All visiting children will be reminded of Lottie's Rules. Lottie has passed her formal PAT training and is currently working in other settings. Risk of scratching and mouthing is reduced as Lottie is now 3 years old – this is generally considered to be puppy behaviour. Children work with Lottie in groups of four.				Parent permissions have been given					
Poppy mouthing accidentally when taking a treat	Children	Fingers being nipped by Lottie	Children taught by Teresa to appropriately give and release treats to Lottie. Lottie is trained to avoid contact with teeth on skin/body. Children taught to recognise the difference between accidental 'mouthing' and biting. School to practise fire alarm procedure and recognise alarm sound when Lottie is in school. Teresa is responsible for Lottie during her sessions in school.	2	3	6	Sign displayed when Lottie is in school – this ensures that other children / adults do not enter the Nurture Room	1	2	2	Teresa and Mrs Biles to ensure that Lottie is sitting before being invited to take a treat as per Teresa's advice to them	At the beginning of the session and throughout

Dog hair causing allergies	Children	Having an allergic reaction	Parents of children working with Lottie have received a letter / permission slip to complete on which they indicate if their child has any allergies. Parents are also asked to inform school of medical conditions/allergies before children start school. Medical information is regularly updated. Teresa ensures that hand sanitiser is always available during the sessions. Visitors advised when dog is in school.	3	3	9	Children have been taught to wash their hands after spending time with Lottie. Lottie is cleaned and brushed regularly to minimise excess hair. Mrs Sprigmore to ensure that all permissions are signed by parents and returned to school prior to any children working with Lottie.	1	1	1	Teresa and Mrs Biles to monitor children's reactions.	At the beginning of the session and throughout
Health and wellbeing / Safeguarding	Children and Lottie		Lottie's immunisations are up to date in accordance with European Pet Passport Scheme and Teresa has a record of this. Teresa ensures that flea, tick and worming treatment is carried out at monthly intervals, prescribed by a vet. Children will be reminded not put their faces close to Lottie's. Children encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly after the session with Lottie.	3	3	9	Lottie works with children in the Nurture Room and does not enter areas where food is eaten or stored. Lottie and Teresa come into school via the Fire Exit in the bottom corridor.	2	2	4	Teresa and Mrs Biles to monitor children and Lottie's interactions and engagement.	At the beginning of the session and throughout

			Teresa has a DBS which has been carried out at Vale View, and has been added to our Single Central Record										
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Approval by IOSH trained member of staff

I have studied this risk assessment and am satisfied with all aspects including the planning, organisation and staffing of this activity. Approval is given.

Ongoing evaluation will be made throughout the sessions to ensure the effectiveness of this risk assessment and it will be amended accordingly.

Signed 

Date: 01.06.2026

Head teacher (Full Name) Lisa Sprigmore