

**St. Mary's Catholic Primary School Risk Assessment**  
**School Dog - Minnie**



**Introduction:**

The value of a school dog 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.

The rationale behind the decision to introduce a school dog was as follows:

- For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
- To have a pet that the children could interact with and also be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with the dog is invited to email the school and inform us of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with the dog as their vet will be responsible for vaccinations, completing regular health checks and necessary treatment. A copy of the dog's health records will be updated and will be available upon request. The dog will also be insured.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked regularly by key staff.

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Risk 1-5</b>	<b>Controls in Place</b>
Minnie getting over excited when interacting with children (especially when still a puppy)	Child getting knocked to the ground (Minnie jumping up).	2	Minnie will always be in the care of a designated handler or a responsible adult. A responsible adult means any member of staff who has read the policy fully, received appropriate training and is aware of the risks and responsibilities to both children and staff.
	Child scratched by the dogs.	3	When not 'working' Minnie will be kept in the Headteacher's office.
	Child bitten by the dog (even if unintended)	4	<p>Minnie will be supervised around the school premises.</p> <p>Children will never be left unsupervised with Minnie.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught how to behave around dogs, how to interact with Minnie and what a dog's body language says about how they are feeling. This will be reinforced on a regular basis.</p> <p>Children will be taught how to react if Minnie gets over excited.</p> <p>All staff will read this risk assessment and the policy and be aware of expectations of staff and children with regards to Minnie.</p> <p>Minnie has undergone formal training with an experienced and accredited trainer. This training will be reinforced at all times. As training progresses and Minnie become more accustomed to school life these risks will lower considerably.</p> <p>Minnie will visit the vet regularly to ensure she is in good health (if she is not she will not be brought to school) and that her claws are kept short.</p>

Minnie causes allergies.	Children or staff have an allergic reaction	1	<p>Minnie is a cocker spaniel, a breed that is known to shed very little and therefore is classed as low allergy.</p> <p>Minnie is groomed regularly.</p> <p>School is kept clean with carpets vacuumed regularly.</p> <p>Parents are able to request that their child/children do not interact with Minnie if there are known allergies. We should already be aware of such allergies through our data collection procedures. A list of any children/staff who should not interact with Minnie will be kept in school and updated as required.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after interacting with Minnie.</p>
Children or adults getting germs from Minnie.	Children or adults contracting diseases or illness that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>Should Minnie defecate on the school site it will be cleaned up immediately (by an adult) and disposed of appropriately.</p> <p>Minnie will be trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. This area will be disinfected regularly.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date and a record of this will be kept.</p> <p>Flea and worm treatment will be carried out regularly and recorded.</p> <p>Minnie will not be allowed in the school hall at meal times and never in the school kitchen.</p>
Noise and barking	Some children may be sensitive to the noise	1	<p>Minnie will be introduced to school life slowly and from so she will get used to the environment so less likely to bark, although she does bark when he is scared or protective.</p> <p>If required, specific children can have extra or fewer sessions with Minnie.</p> <p>If required specific and identified children would be allowed to use ear defenders.</p>

Key:

- 1 – Low risk
- 2 – Low to medium risk
- 3 – Medium risk
- 4 – Medium to high risk
- 5 – High risk