



# School Dog Policy

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	3
School Policy	3
Actions	5
Roles and responsibilities	5
Appendix 1 – Reasons to have a dog in school	5
Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions	6

## **Introduction**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, many children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

This policy relates to the use of a school dog for therapeutic or educational reasons. No other dogs are allowed on the school site, with the exception of assistant dogs, at any time, unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher. This includes drop-off and collection times. This policy outlines the measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

### **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

Yes, there are risks associated with dogs coming into school environments. However, there are a variety of accidents which can happen in school which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents which could be caused by an appropriately handled and controlled dog. It is therefore another risk within the environment which needs to be managed. For this reason, a thorough risk assessment has been carried out.

## **School Policy**

- The owner of the dog will be known to the school and the headteacher.
- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.
- The school dog will be a breed known for its intelligence and temperament.
- The dog breed will be chosen for being friendly and gentle and their highly intelligent nature - resulting in them being responsive to training.
- The Chair of Governors and the governing board have agreed that the school dog may benefit the children and staff of Lipson Vale Primary School.
- Staff, parents, and children have been informed that a dog will be in school.
- A risk assessment has been produced which will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a school dog that is based in the office and any protocols surrounding it. Any issues will be relayed to the Headteacher or School Business Manager.
- If the dog is ill, it will not be allowed in school.
- The dog will be based in a school office. It will be locked inside the office if it is to be unattended at any point during the school day.

- The dog will be kept on a lead during its time in school, moving between classrooms, or on walks. The dog will be under the full control and supervision of a competent adult.
- Children will never be left alone with the dog. There will be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children will be taught and reminded about appropriate behaviour around the dog. They will be shown how to remain calm. They will be taught that they should not make sudden movements or put their face near the dog. They will be taught that they should always approach the dog standing up.
- Children will be taught never to go near the dog and disturb the dog when it is eating or sleeping.
- Children will not be permitted to play roughly with the dog.
- Children will be taught that they must always ask permission before touching/stroking the dog. In school they will be taught to wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching / stroking it. The children will be taught to stroke the dog on his body, chest and back and not by his face or the top of his head.
- The competent adult in charge of the dog must closely supervise it and monitor situations where there may be a number of children surrounding the dog. If the dog seems nervous, or agitated, it will be removed from the situation and brought back to its safe and calm space in the office.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling, or baring of teeth indicate that the dog feels angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog displays any of these warning signs, it will be immediately removed from the situation or environment and returned to its safe and calm space in the office. The adults involved will consider the situation in light of the risk assessment and make any necessary adjustments including, if necessary, reconsidering the suitability of the dog in the school environment.
- Children will not eat near the dog.
- Children will always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff member is supervising it at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.

## **Actions**

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this must be passed on to the Headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Headteacher.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how to behave around our school dog and other dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

## **Appendix 1 – Reasons to have a dog in school**

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:-

- Improved academic achievement
- Increased literacy skills
- Calming behaviours
- Increased social skills and self-esteem
- Increased confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help prevent truancy
- Motivate children who may be less attentive

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

### **Behaviour**

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students who can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. Some schools are using dogs to promote positive behaviour in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour was found to improve towards teachers and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of the school having a dog.

### **Attendance**

In some schools, dogs have been used to improve attendance and truancy. Children have been reported to want to attend school in order to care for the school dog and their attendance has improved.

## **Education**

Dogs have been used for some time to support reading in schools. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even an adult, are likely to be less scared to read to a dog – after all, a dog won't judge or correct a nervous reader. Dogs are frequently used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. Dogs give unconditional acceptance because they are non-judgemental which is crucial to emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read. Dogs make incredible listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that students who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the students they mix with.

## **Social Development**

Dogs in school offer the opportunity for students to learn social skills and responsibility. Students have the opportunity to care for the animal, including grooming and walking. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of school dogs can help to promote the students' personal care. Students learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other to take care of a dog at school. Dogs can work with students on a 1:1 basis and have been found to especially help those students who have been bullied, gone through upsetting times, or even those who are scared of dogs. The dog will bring joy and help to all the students that they meet and will be happy to provide plenty of cuddles to the students that they spend time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

## **Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?** The legal owner of the dog will be identified on the risk assessment associated to the school dog. The legal owner is responsible for any costs associated to the dog. School may, as with any resources, purchase specific items that enable pupils to better engage with the school dog. A record of up-to-date vaccinations will be included in the risk assessment.

**Is the dog from a reputable breeder?** Yes. The breeder is a responsible breeder. Both parent dogs were seen prior to purchase in their home environment. Both parent dogs were owned by the breeder.

**Will the dog be a distraction?** The dog will be kept in the office area which is separate from the classrooms and playground. The dog will only come into contact with children who have parental permission for this, under strict supervision and following a set timetable.

The dog will attend staff meetings and other events to support its further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand. The dog will occasionally visit classrooms, the school library, playground, or extended schools provision under strict supervision.

**Has a risk assessment been undertaken?** Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and have sought advice from different sources, including other schools that have school dogs.

**Who is responsible for training?** The dog's legal owner is responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will have been obtained when the dog was young and the school will look to get certification for the dog as an appropriate companion dog in the future.

**How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?** In the interest of health, safety and hygiene, the dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks near to the school. Any mess will be cleared away appropriately and hygienically.

There may be times that the dog will visit the school playground as part of its work with children. In these circumstances, appropriate cleaning equipment will be taken outside to ensure that any accidents can quickly be dealt with.

**How will the dog's welfare be considered?** The dog will be brought into school to familiarise itself with the school environment prior to beginning its School Dog role, so that it gets used to the noises, sights and sounds of the busy school environment. It will be regularly handled by a range of adults in the school to ensure that it is comfortable and happy with the range of adults who will be in contact with him.

The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission, in advance, to allow their child to walk with a member of staff and the dog at that time.

The dog will be kept in an office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. It will have a secure space/bed in the office where it will be able to rest. The dog is well trained and will continue to have consistent signals/verbal instructions akin with its training by those adults who are responsible for it. It will have free access to water throughout the day and be fed as appropriate.

If there is ever any concern for the dog's welfare, it will be returned to the designated member of staff on site.

**How will the dog be managed for children / adults with allergies?** Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults who 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 dog is known for minimal moulting and for this reason is often chosen by allergy sufferers because the likelihood of a reaction is reduced. The dog is given high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any potential allergens.

**My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?** Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given, and the children are comfortable to spend time close to the dog. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fears and help them to manage it.