



School Dog Policy



Agreed: July 2025

Review: July 2027

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with pets. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with dogs and puppies.

2. Rationale

- 2.1 **Behaviour** problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour in children. In a controlled study, children were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Children's behaviour improved toward teachers, and children also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school. Researchers report that children can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel when they are struggling with behaviour issues
- 2.2 **Attendance** Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive. The school dog can also be used to support transition into school for those children who may be anxious and reluctant to come in to school.
- 2.3 **Social Development:** Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.
- 2.4 **As a reward:** Dogs are gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the children. Those children who have shown exceptional effort during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, may be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.
- 2.5 **As a support:** Dogs can work with children on a one to one basis and will especially help those children who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.
- 2.6 **Reading programmes with dogs.** Research shows that reading with dogs has a positive impact on children's progress. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, children find social support and peer interaction.
- 2.7 **Dogs are incredibly calm** and happy to have children read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. Dogs give

unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dogs also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in interpersonal skills among the children they mix with.

3. Guidance

3.1 It is important that suitable arrangements are in place prior to any dog being brought into the school. These arrangements must follow this school policy on Dogs in School, which is based on the following guidance:

- Parents should be notified of the intention to bring a dog into the school
- A risk assessment should be carried out prior to the visit of any dog into school
- The dog should be well used to the behaviour and sounds of children
- If the dog is ill he must not be brought into school
- The dog must be kept on a lead at all times whilst walking around the school building and under the full control and supervision of the Headteacher or designated staff member
- The children will never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Prior to the dog being in a classroom or in school, pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs. Children are likely to become excited and it is important that they react calmly and carefully around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Children should be told not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should be told never to go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog
- The number of children will be considered with regard to patting/stroking or meeting the dog. A large number of children could cause the dog to become nervous and agitated. On-going monitoring of the situation is vital. Since dogs cannot speak, the only way they can be understood is through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling 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. Dogs displaying any of these warning signs should be immediately removed from the environment. Pupils will be made aware of these warning signs.
- Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately. Designated staff will use gloves and spray to clear all dog waste when walking the dog around the outside of the school grounds.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The board of Governors has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School
- 4.2 The Headteacher is responsible for developing this guidance into a school practice and implementing it.
- 4.3 Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.
- 4.4 The school will :-

- Have the dog health checked by a vet and a record of injections kept
 - Ensure the dog and pupils are trained to handle the school environment
 - Ensure the dog is fully inoculated
 - Ensure the dog has a quiet space for sleep and peace (Headteacher's office)
 - Give children and parents the opportunity to not have their child around the dog
 - Give thought to children who are scared of dogs
- 4.5 Send a request form home for parents to identify children who have dog allergies and provide anti-allergy wipes or keep the dog away from those children
- 4.6 Only allow handling when the dog is calm and the Headteacher has confidence in the dog.

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