



St. Gregory's Catholic Primary School

School Dog Policy

March 2025

1. Introduction

Pupils 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, pupils take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

1.1 Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

Yes there is, though there are a variety of accidents, which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3).

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

2. School Policy

The dog will be owned by Miss. Emma Shaughnessy.

- 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 Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.
- The dog chosen is a French Bulldog because that breed will respond well to training and is known to be good with children. French Bulldogs shed little hair and are very sociable and friendly.
- The Chair of Governors, and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the pupils and staff St. Gregory's Primary School.
- Staff, parents and pupils have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been produced (see appendix 3) and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school.
- The 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 specified adults within school.
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Pupils should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must not stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Pupils should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.

- Pupils should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Pupils must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Everyone must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of pupils, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling, whimpering, barking or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry, fearful 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 is displaying any of these warning signs she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Pupils should not eat close to the dog.
- Pupils should be careful to stroke the dog on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- Pupils should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. Dedicated space to use.
- Parents/Carers will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Head Teacher asap.
- Emma Shaughnessy will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Emma Shaughnessy.

3. Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher, or the Business Lead as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Head teacher.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

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

The Head teacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

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

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. 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:-

- 1) Improve academic achievement
- 2) Increase literacy skills
- 3) Calming behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 8) Motivate pupils who are often 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 pupils who can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. 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 pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents/carers reported that pupils seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance:

Case study: Mandy was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Pupils 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," pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of pupils 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 pupils as they do not pass judgement when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the pupils with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils 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 pupils they mix with.

Social Development:

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils' social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older pupils use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils.

With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

As a reward:

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Those pupils who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibility's pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves pupils' social skills and self-esteem.

Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils 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 pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

[Appendix 2 – School Dog Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A The legal owner of the dog will be Emma Shaughnessy; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dog is from a breeder where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in Emma Shaughnessy's office. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with pupils who are happy to have contact and

have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a time to spend time in classrooms, the library and on the school field where pupils can interact safely.

The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Emma Shaughnessy will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. The dog has attended puppy classes and 12 week programme of training.

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene our school the dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only designated staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Our policy of no dogs on the school site is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when students come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given time outside. Parents/Carers will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in Miss Shaughnessy's office and will only have planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where pupils have allergies?

A Pupils 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 pupils and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents/carers to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

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

A Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and pupils do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents/carers of pupils who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Appendix 3 – Risk Assessment

SERVICE AREA / TEAM	St. Gregory’s Catholic School
ACTIVITY / TASK	School Dog- Bruno
COMPLETED BY & DATE	Emma Shaughnessy March 2025
REVIEW DATE	March 2026

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Dog getting over-excited when interacting with children	Child being knocked over / scratched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely through the premises. Children are not allowed with the dog unsupervised. The dog will be on their lead when in the school playground and moving through school. The dog will have slow conditioning to the school, starting with getting to know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will be taught and reminded of consequence of actions as part of PSHE work. Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent a dog from chasing them (stand still, arms folded, walk into her space calmly) The dog will attend vets and groomers regularly to make 	ES or specified responsible adult.	Ongoing	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
		<p>the building and the staff and slowly being introduced to the children.</p>	<p>sure his claws are kept short and he is in good health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog has completed obedience training from the age of 12 weeks and practice of the skills will also take place in the school grounds. 			
<p>The dog gets loose from her crate, her lead or a classroom or leaves the premises</p>	<p>Children may be knocked over</p> <p>Children/staff may come into contact with her who don't wish to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The crate / dog bed is kept in the Headteacher's office which only accessible through the main office. Both the Headteacher's office and the main office have closable doors. The door on the Headteacher's office which will remain shut when the dog is in there, with a sign on the door saying "Dog occupied. Do not enter without knocking". 		<p>ES or specified responsible adult.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exterior doors will be kept closed if the dog is off her lead. • Whenever out of a classroom or the Headteacher's office, the dog will be kept on a lead inside the building and in the playground. • The school grounds are secure so the dog will not be able to leave the premises. When off the lead he will be kept under close supervision. • There are members of staff who will be called upon in the event of the dog getting loose or if he needs attention at any other time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emma Shaughnessy ➤ SLT ➤ Site Manager ➤ Office Staff 				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Children, staff or visitors who have phobias of dogs	Children, Staff or Visitors could be frightened or have a panic attack.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No child, staff member or visitor will be made to have contact with the dog if they choose not to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/Carers and staff will be informed of the dog coming in to school and be given an 'opt out' by letting the office or the Headteacher know if they do not wish their child to be in close contact with the dog. Office staff will place a note on Arbor 		March 2025 – before dog comes into school	
Dog's hair causes allergies	Children Staff Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frenchie's are low shedding, dogs who have short hair which sheds less than other dog coats which means less hair and dander is released into the environment. Parents/Carers have informed school of any medical needs or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/Carers will be informed of the dog coming in to school and be given an 'opt out' by letting the office or the Head know if they do not wish their child to be in close contact with the dog. 	ES	March 2025 – before dog comes into school	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
		allergies through the school recording system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New families to school will be introduced to the dog on school transition visits. 	ES	As needed	
Getting germs from the dog	Children Staff Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it safely in poo bags outside bins. The dog will be taught to toilet in a space where children do not have regular access. All immunisations, worming and flea protection are kept up to date and are the responsibility of the Headteacher, Emma Shaughnessy The dog will not go into the school dining hall during meal times and will not be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will be taught to thoroughly wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap after coming into contact with the dog 	ES or specified responsible adult.	March 2025 – before dog comes into school	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
		permitted into food preparation areas.				
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep	School budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dog is the responsibility of Emma Shaughnessy and she is financially responsible for the dog's care and day-to-day costs. The dog is the responsibility of Emma Shaughnessy out of school hours. Training costs will be met by Emma Shaughnessy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ES may request a contribution towards formal training if necessary, which will go through the governing body resources committee. 	ES and Resources committee	If required	
Claim is made against the school re. the behaviour of the dog	School budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emma Shaughnessy insures the dog however third party liability is not covered for when the dog is on school property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain Public and Products liability insurance for when the dog is at work through BCCET 	ES	March 2025	

Plan for use of a school dog – two days per week

- To calm and soothe children who feel stressed, anxious, upset, angry or low self-esteem
- Children will be able to complete Bruno request forms or staff can request therapy.
- To teach children how to look after a living thing, such as grooming, walking, petting – there will be times when a child can take care of Bruno. Bruno can go out on the playground at breaktime but he must be on the lead and he will be under the care of a member of staff. When Bruno is taken for a walk this will be done in the Playground area or on the school field and designated staff will pick up faeces, not children.
- Children can request time to sit and read with Bruno.

The backdrop to the decision to train a school dog

Research shows that:

- The presence of animals tends to lessen tension in the classroom.
- Children from families with pets are better equipped to fight off infection, showing higher levels of immune system performance. When school attendance records were compared side by side, researchers discovered that children with pets averaged more days at school every year than their pet-free counterparts.
- Children turn to their pets for emotional well-being, with 40% choosing pet companionship when feeling down. Children were also found to seek out their pets when feeling tired, upset, scared or lonely.
- Helping to care for an animal gives a child a sense of pride and accomplishment, especially if the animal returns the affection. Children with pets have higher levels of self-esteem than those without them.

At St. Gregory's:

- We have a high level of children with particular needs and emotional wellbeing needs.
- We believe in promoting emotional wellbeing for all.
- Part of our school ethos is very much about caring for each other and within the school family.

