

School Dog Policy (2022-23)

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, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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.

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.

School Policy

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. No other dogs must come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the head teacher has been informed before hand.
- The dog is owned by Miss Wells who is responsible for the dog and he will be based in Balmoral classroom in a penned area. Children will not be allowed access to him unless consent is given by parent/guardian.
- If the dog needs a child-free, quiet zone, he can go to the office to rest.
- The dog will be given a 'settling in' period to ensure he gets used to his penned area, surroundings and new noises and smells. During this time, contact with children will be limited.
- The breed of dog (spaniel) has been chosen carefully ensuring that it is an intelligent breed that has responded well to training and which is known to be good with children, which sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.
- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School. The head teacher along with Natalie White is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, children, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.
- Staff and parents will be informed by letter that a dog will be in school.
- A full risk assessment will be undertaken and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- Signage will be used in the office window to indicate there is a dog on site and 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 under supervision at all times when moving around the school, this can include the use of a lead but is not necessary.
- When outside, the dog can be let off the lead to walk with children and play interactive games such as fetch.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Staff working with the dog shall ensure that children are reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
 - Children should remain calm 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 not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
 - Children should not try to hug the dog or put their arm around its throat.
 - Children should never go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating.
 - Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
 - Children must not eat around the dog.
- Staff working with the dog shall ensure that children are aware of the behavioural signs from the dog are understood
 - Dogs express their feelings 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.
 - If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs it should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment or children removed away from the dog – whichever is more appropriate at the time.
 - If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Adults supervising the dog shall ensure that
 - Children should not eat close to the dog.
 - Children should be careful to stroke the dog on his body, chest, back and not by its face, eyes or top of head.
 - Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the supervising adult using dog poo bags.
- Parents 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.

- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.
- The dog is fully vaccinated and is wormed and treated for fleas by the owner.
- The dog is regularly groomed to ensure hair around his eyes are short and nothing effects his peripheral vision.
- If the dog dies those students that have become attached to the dog will be offered ELSA and suitable support will be put in place.
- The school's insurance policy must cover the dog and any possible subsequent claim that may be made.
- If Miss Wells feels that Sparky is unhappy coming or being at school at any time, she will make the decision to either withdraw Sparky from the role of 'school dog' or give him a 'break' from the role.

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 increase attendance
- 8) Motivate children 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 students 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 students 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 students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students' behaviour improved toward teachers, and students 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.

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 students. 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," students find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have student 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 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 an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students.

With a dog in school, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The students 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 students. Those students 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, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Support Dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students 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 students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students 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 Miss Wells is the legal owner and bears the costs associated with owning the dog.

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 and a reputable dog behaviourist.

Q Has the dog been trained?

The dog has undergone training but further appropriate professional training can be sought if felt necessary.

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

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

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog lives with Miss Wells and is walked on a daily basis. The dog will be walked in the morning and brought to school at lunch time and given free time outside during the afternoon. Parents 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 have unlimited access to water and be fed regularly. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered. The dog will have rest breaks. The dog also has a dog walker twice a week to ensure he has an hour away from school and spends time with other dogs.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A 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 that 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 breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, it is given a high quality food, is regularly groomed and has his hair cut short 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 children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.