



School Dog Policy

NOVEMBER 2024

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?

Of course 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 considered to be another risk that needs to be managed, and for which a risk assessment has been undertaken.

School Policy

Our dog's behaviour and temperament have been assessed and has passed the Pets as Therapy (PAT) certification meaning the dog is a registered Therapy Dog.

Staff will be informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a PAT dog. Parents will be consulted by letter regarding having a dog in school. A risk assessment has been produced; this will be reviewed annually.

- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. Parents will be encouraged to inform the school if their child has an allergy to or fear of dogs so that a list can be maintained, and the dog kept away from those children.
- If the dog is ill it will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving around the school premises or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children will not be left alone with the dog and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with children.
- Children should be 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 to put their face near the dog. Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

- 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.
- 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, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Reading programs, and other therapeutic interventions with dogs have been shown to have a positive impact on outcomes. 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 practice reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," Children find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have children read to them or join a group of children who are receiving other forms of intervention. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to those who find learning difficult. The dogs also provide confidence to children, as they do not make fun of them when they learn, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that children who work with 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 children they mix with.

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

With a dog in the school, 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.

As a reward: Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the Children. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Therapy Dogs can work with children on a one-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.

The wider community: Dogs can be a great way for to help children to interact with members of the wider community. For example, children may take the dog to visit other schools, hospitals or care homes and help others to benefit from this therapeutic support.

Implementation and Review

This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers and governors, and published on the academy's website. Copies are also available upon request from the academy office. This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required.

Written by: Debbie Randall

Date: November 2024

Agreed by Principal: Debbie Randall

Date: November 2024

Ratified by Governors:

Date: November 2024