

Dog in School Policy

Date of Approval: January 2018

Date of next review: January 2020

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Introduction

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

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

There is a risk factor involved in everything we do and though there are a variety of accidents that can happen in a 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. The management of potential risks are outlined in the risk assessment.

School Policy

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Claire Hart
- The dog is a cocker spaniel, chosen for its friendly, calm temperament and willingness to learn
- Mrs Dury, Headteacher and the Governors have agreed that the school can have a dog
- Parents/Carers will be informed that a dog will be in school. They will be asked to indicate if their child should be kept away from the dog for either health or cultural reasons.
- A risk assessment is in place and this will be reviewed annually and in light of any incidents linked to the dog
- Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog
- 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 an adult
- Pupils will receive information through assemblies and teaching staff about how to behave around the dog
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with pupils
- 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 never stare into the dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Pupils should not put their faces near the dog and should always approach it standing up
- Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog
- Pupils should never go near the dog when it is sleeping or eating
- 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 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.

- Pupils should not feed, or eat close to the dog
- Pupils should always wash their hands before and after handling the dog
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately
- If a bit or allergy incident were to occur, first aid will be given, the parents/carers will be contacted. The incident will be reviewed for future learning to avoid a similar circumstance

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. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility

Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required

Reasons to have a dog in school

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 towards teachers, and pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seem more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read out loud to the class or even adults are less likely to be 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", pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Bullying/friendship issues can be a problem in all schools with pupils anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. Researchers report that pupils 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 when down 62%