



Paulton Infant School

SCHOOL DOG POLICY

Review Due:	September 2024
Last Review	September 2021
Applicable to:	Paulton Infant School
Reviewed By:	Emily Omell
Approved By:	Governors

School Dogs Policy

Introduction

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

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

Yes, there is a risk, but the benefits 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.

Dogs are not allowed anywhere unsupervised during the school day. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

School Policy

The school dog is the only dog permitted in the school site at any time. This is to safeguard all staff, pupils and the dog, as the level of training and behaviour of other dogs is unknown. Assistance and Therapy dogs are permitted following consultation with the Head Teacher.

The dog will be owned by Emily Omell.

The dog is a German Shepherd and has been chosen because they are an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and are known to be good with children. They are very sociable and friendly. The governors and the governing board agree that the school dog will benefit the children and staff. Governors have been involved in the animal care action plan.

Staff, parents and children have been informed that dog will be in school. A Risk assessment has been written for the dog and this will be reviewed annually. Staff, visitors and children 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, they 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. The dog may roam off lead in enclosed spaces under supervision of staff and with pupils who are used to being around them. Children must never be left alone with a dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Children should remain calm around the dogs. 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 never go near or disturb the dogs when they are sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs.

Actions

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

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Emily Omell is responsible for ensuring that her dog has full working dog insurance.

The Head Teacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. 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 children who are often less attentive 9) Supports well-being for staff

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having dogs in school:

Behaviour:

In some school's dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. Researchers report that students can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dogs, 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, as a result of having a dog at school, parents reported that children seemed more interested in attending school.

Attendance:

Case study: Pupils will often ask if a dog is in and this can be a high motivator in order to attend school for those that have anxiety. In addition, dogs can be used as a motivator for some pupils who find it a challenge to manage their own behaviour.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs support 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. 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 a 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, and 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 student's 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 can 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 dogs 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, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibility's 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.

School 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 dogs 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 Dogs Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

A The legal owner of the dogs will be Emily Omell; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dogs.

Q Are the dogs from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dogs are from homes where the mother was seen and have been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dogs be a distraction?

A We believe the risk of the dogs being a distraction out ways the benefits of them being in school.

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 dogs and a reputable dogs behaviourist.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Emily Omell will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for his training.

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 when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will be kept in offices and will have planned and supervised contact with children 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 dogs' welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Children will not have to touch the dogs, 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 dogs are 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 dogs is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless they want to. 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.