



School Dog Policy 2023



Date of Policy- January 2023

Signed by Headteacher- Z. Scott

Chair of LAC-

Date of review- January 2024

Rationale

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Reading Dogs are being used to help children develop fluency in reading and Therapy Dogs provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues.

Increasingly in schools, it is becoming recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom.

A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children with trouble managing their behaviour could learn to care for the dog and the dog could be helpful in de-escalating anger. Reading dogs can help boost children's confidence and fluency.

Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion. Dogs are great fun to have around

and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

Preparations for having a School Dog

Having a dog in school is a big step and the arrangement needs to work for all groups in our school community. School leaders have taken advice from schools who currently have a school dog as a Therapy Dog. In order to ensure that the dog would be beneficial to the children's learning and wellbeing and not be a distraction, we will plan when and where the children will interact with the dog.

If any child is allergic to dog hair we make sure that they don't come into contact with the dog (or have restricted contact) if parents request it. Likewise, if a child has a phobia of dogs we will keep the dog away from them, or we can offer opportunities for the child to be slowly introduced to the dog, to reduce their fear. Parents are invited to contact the Headteacher if either of these cases apply, so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

Bennie

Our school dog is Bennie, who is also Mrs Scotts' family pet. Bennie is a Shih Tzu and was born on 8th October 2014. His breed was selected as he is small and friendly and his fur is great for people who suffer allergies and are considered by many as hypoallergenic. (no dogs are 100% hypoallergenic) Bennie had lots of early socialisation with children at the home to ensure his suitability to work in a school and lives currently lives with young children. Bennie has regular check-ups at the vet and has updated vaccinations, flea and worming treatment.

Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog

Parents/ carers are informed that there is a school dog and can request that their children don't have contact with the dog. There will always be a responsible adult in charge of the dog during interactions with children.

Children and adults are required to adhere to the following;

- Always approach the school dog calmly and slowly
- Never run up to the dog
- Offer the back of your hand for the dog to sniff when meeting the dog
- All interactions must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times
- Children must wash their hands before eating if they have been stroking the dog.

Frequently Asked Questions

What will the school dog do on a day to day basis?

The dog would be based in the Headteacher's office but would be on the playground at some playtimes, as well as some lunchtimes. Designated staff will take the dog to help with interventions (e.g. 1-1 sessions where the child is reluctant to come out of class). The dog may visit different classes to listen to readers with a volunteer or help with particular projects, such as learning about caring for animals. The dog would always be kept on a lead, unless contained in the Head's office.

How do I know that my child will be safe around the dog?

A risk assessment and policy will be in place and will be available on the school website.

Children will only have contact with the dog when supervised by an adult. When moving around the school, the dog will always be on the lead.

Will my child pick up infections from the dog?

The dog will be fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and will be kept away from the school if it is ill. Children will be required to wash their hands before eating if they have been handling the dog. There will be a dedicated dog toilet area away from areas that children access and no child will be asked to pick up dog mess.

What if my child is allergic to dogs or afraid of them?

Parents can request that their child has no contact, or restricted access to the dog in these situations. Please speak to Mrs Scott to discuss any concerns.