

# School Dog Policy

## Introduction

Young people and 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, young people and children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. (See Appendix 1).

## School Policy

- The dog is owned by **Ms Anna McQuade**, who is our school counsellor – it is our aim for the dog to be in school on a Thursday and Friday each week
- The dog is a Cockapoo crossed with a Labrador chosen for its very mild temperament and non-moulting coat
- Mrs Plews, Headteacher, and Mr Cutler, Chairman of 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 students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog
- If the dog is ill she 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 at all times
- Students will receive information through gatherings and tutor time about how to behave around the dog
- Students will never be left alone with the dog and there will always be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students
- Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Students 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
- Students should not put their faces near the dog and should always approach it standing up
- Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog
- Students will not go near the dog when it is sleeping or eating
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students and becomes nervous and agitated, the adult in charge must ensure that s/he monitors the situation
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate 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 she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment
- Students should not feed, or eat close to the dog

- Students should always wash their hands after handling a dog
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately
- If a bite 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 circumstances.

### **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.

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This policy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in line with government legislation and at least on a three-yearly basis.

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## 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

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, grooming, 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.

Therapy 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 The legal owner of the dog is Ms Anna McQuade; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

#### **Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?**

A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

#### **Q Will the dog be a distraction?**

A The dog will be kept in School House in H4. The classroom is separate from other classrooms area to ensure the dog only comes into contact with students who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and in the grounds where students can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

#### **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.

#### **Q Who is responsible for training?**

A Ms McQuade is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog through the Pawfect Dogsense Company with advice from the Pets As Therapy charity.

#### **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. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their student 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 be kept in H4 and will only have planned and supervised contact with students 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 dog's welfare is always considered.

**Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A Students 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 students 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, she is 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 dog is carefully managed and supervised and students do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of students who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Our policy of **NO** dogs in the school ground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when students come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.