



SCHOOL DOG POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2023

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> 1. Introduction and guidelines

Pupils 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, pupils take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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

Yes, 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 just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and available for staff and visitors to see.

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Executive Head. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

The dog's will be owned by a member of school

1. Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Assistant Head has been informed beforehand.
2. The dog breeds (Labradoodle, Cockapoo and Pommadoo) have been chosen because they are intelligent breeds that will respond well to training and are known to be good with pupils, shed little hair and are very sociable and friendly.
3. Staff, parents and pupils have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. Michelle Quayle has produced a risk assessment, and this will be reviewed annually.
4. Staff, visitors and pupils 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.
5. If the dogs are unwell, they will not be allowed into school.
6. Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult present.
7. 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 a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Pupils should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
8. Pupils should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
9. Pupils must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
10. Everyone must wait until the dogs are sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.

11. 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 he/she monitors the situation.
12. Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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's displays any of these warning signs, they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
13. Pupils should not eat close to the dog.
14. Pupils should be careful to stroke the dogs on their body, chest, back and not by the face or top of head area.
15. Pupils should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
16. Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
17. Parents will be consulted on allowing their pupil access to the dog.
18. All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Assistant Head or Executive Head asap.
19. The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
20. The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the Executive Head.

> 2. Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher.

> 3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school. The Assistant Head is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, 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 dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained, and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

> 4. 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:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Calming behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help prevent truancy
- Motivate pupils who are often less attentive

> 5. The logic and research behind school dogs

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

5.1. 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 pupils 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 pupils. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and the pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that pupils seemed more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

5.2. Education

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Pupils 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 pupil 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," pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils read to them or join a group of pupils 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 pupils as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the pupils with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils 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.

5.3. Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older pupils use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils. With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school. Merrywood House has a range of lunchtime clubs around the care and social side of dogs. Pupils are encouraged to take ownership of the care of the dogs.

5.4. As a reward

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for pupils. Pupils 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 pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves pupils's social skills and self-esteem.

Support Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils 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 pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

> 6. 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 will be the Executive Head; 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's will be kept in the office area and have beds that they sleep in. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with pupils 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 and in the garden where pupils 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 dog's in school and sought advice from many sources, including pupils and parents.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A The Executive Head will be the legal owner of the dog's and as a result, will be responsible for the training.

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dogs 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 pupil 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 and lunch time clubs. The dog will be kept in the admin area/HT office and will only have planned and supervised contact with pupils 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 pupils have allergies?

A Pupils will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. 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 and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Q My pupil is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

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

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