



School Dog Policy

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.

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 this is included in this document (see appendix 3).

School Policy

The dog is owned by the School Business Manager, Mr. Tuxworth.

The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.

Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.

The dog is Labrador Retriever which is a breed that responds well to training and which is known to be good with children. The dog is very sociable and friendly.

Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school and asked to inform the school if they don't wish their child to be near the dog. A risk assessment has been written and 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 poorly she will not be allowed into school.

The dog will be under the supervision of an adult at all times and children must never be left alone with the dog.

First aiders will be aware of the treatment required if someone suffers a dog bite. If a child is bitten and the skin is broken, it will be recommended that the child be seen by a medical professional.

Appropriate behaviour around the dog

Whenever the dog is with children the adult supervising should ensure the children carry out the following:

- they 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
- they should not put their face near the dog and should always approach it standing up
- they should never go near or disturb the dog whilst she is sleeping or eating
- they must not play roughly with the dog
- the dog should not be stroked until she is sitting or lying down
- the adult in charge of the dog must ensure she is not surrounded by a large number of people which may make her anxious and stressed
- if the dog is displaying warning signs that she is angry or threatened such as growling or baring teeth, flattened ears, tail between the legs or whining then she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment
- children should not eat close to the dog
- the dog should only be stroked on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head
- children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.

Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

All visitors will be informed about the dog and if anyone has a fear or is allergic then the office staff will ask that the dog is kept away from them throughout their visit.

In the event of the school being evacuated following an alarm then the dog will accompany the adult who is supervising at the time and once outside will be passed on to Mr. Tuxworth when appropriate.

Actions

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

The Head teacher 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.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Encourage calming behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Help prevent truancy
- 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, they have empathy for the dog and 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%. If behaviour problems occur in school then 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 towards 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 can help some students. Children who might be reluctant to read aloud are likely to be less so if reading 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 students 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 and 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. Children who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain area, or those who have achieved tasks set for them can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students could undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Support dogs can work with students on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those children who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring joy and help to all the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions

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

The legal owner of the dog is Mr. Tuxworth; he will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog will be kept in the office area and will only go to other parts of the school under the supervision of an adult.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

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 (see appendix 3).

Who is responsible for training?

Mr. Tuxworth is the legal owner and he has taken the dog to training and socialization classes. He will be responsible for any further training that may be required.

Will my child pick up infections from the dog?

The dog is 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. If the dog leaves a mess in the grounds it will be cleared by an adult and the area disinfected if necessary. No child will be asked to pick up dog mess.

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

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.

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

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will be kept in the office area and will only have supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered. If she is showing signs of stress or anxiety she will be taken away from the situation and returned to Mr. Tuxworth in the office.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. If a child is allergic to dogs then the dog will be kept well away. The dog will be regularly groomed to minimize any hair left in the school when moulting. The school already manages children with allergies and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs.

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

Access to the dog will be carefully supervised and children do not need to have close contact with her unless they are happy to do so. We hope that seeing the dog over time and the non-threatening behaviour it exhibits, that a nervous child will gradually become more confident. 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.

Appendix 3

Activity / Event: School Dog	Date Assessed: 30/05/2020	Directorate/Section/Unit:
Assessor's Name: Jason Tuxworth	Assessment Ref. No.:	Assessor's Signature:
High Risk (Rate >7) – Unacceptable risk, take immediate action	Moderate Risk (Rate 4 – 6) - May or may not be an acceptable risk. Introduce & make all efforts to control/reduce risk	Low Risk (Rate 1-3) – Risk may be acceptable, but consider possible low or no-cost improvements.

A Hazards (the potential for harm) arising from activity / event	B Can the hazard be avoided? Y/N	C Risks (Identify who may be harmed, how they may be harmed and how likely it is)	D E F G			Existing controls (preventive and protective measures provided)	H J K L M				N P Q R			
			Likelihood (1-4)	Severity (1-4)	Risk Level (1-16)		Risk level without controls	Likelihood (1-4)	Severity (1-4)	Risk Level (1-16)	Risk level acceptable Y/N	Additional control measures required to reduce risk to acceptable level	Residual risk Level	Initials of Line Manager responsible for monitoring (G) and implementing (M)
Children coming into contact with dog faeces	N	Children and adults	2	3	6	Dog is toileted part of the school not used for playing. Faeces are removed in bags. The area is disinfected if necessary.	1	3	3	Y				
Contact with dog sick	N	Children and adults	2	2	4	If the dog is showing signs of being unwell she will not come into school. An adult will clear up the sick using cloths and the area will be disinfected afterwards.	1	2	2	Y				
Stroking/contact with dog and touching mouth or food	Y	Children and adults	3	2	6	Children reminded to wash hands by staff supervising dog. Anti-bacterial gel available in classrooms, offices and staffroom.	2	2	4	Y				
Fleas, ticks, worms etc.	N	Children and adults	3	3	9	The dog will be receiving regular flea/tick and worm treatment. The dog will be seen by a vet annually.	1	3	3	Y				
Being scratched by the dog being over excited whilst playing or jumping up	Y	Children and adults	2	3	6	Children will be taught how and when it is safe to interact with dog. Dog supervised by staff at all times and the dog will be withdrawn from the group if she appears to be getting over excited.	1	3	3	Y				
Allergic reaction after contact with dog	Y	Children and adults	2	4	8	Parents given the choice to opt out of close contact with the dog. Medical records used to list pupils identified as having an allergy and not to have contact with dog. Children to wash hands after contact with dog. The dog is kept away from any staff with allergies. Dog bedding regularly washed to reduce dust. Visitors advised dog is in the school and the dog is kept away if requested. All parents aware dog is in school.	1	4	4	Y				

A Hazards (the potential for harm) arising from activity / event	B Can the hazard be avoided? Y/N	C Risks (Identify who may be harmed, how they may be harmed and how likely it is)	D E F G			Existing controls (preventive and protective measures provided)	H J K L M				Additional control measures required to reduce risk to acceptable level	N P Q R				
			Risk level without controls	Likelihood (1-4)	Severity (1-4)		Risk Level (1-16)	Likelihood (1-4)	Severity (1-4)	Risk Level (1-16)		Risk level acceptable Y/N	Residual risk Level	Likelihood (1-4)	Severity (1-4)	Risk Level (1-16)
Distress caused through close proximity to dog	N	Children and adults	2	2	4	Advise visitors and remove the dog if necessary. Notice signs in school entrance advising of the dog's presence and asking visitors to make office staff aware if they are uncomfortable. Staff to supervise dog at all times and be sensitive to all children's reactions. Nervous children to be kept away from the dog unless they're wishing to interact. Parents to be offered programme of support for child to help overcome aversion.	1	4	4	Y						
Dog bites someone	N	Children and adults	2	3	6	Staff to regularly monitor dog's temperament, behaviour and mood. Staff to supervise dog at all times. Children to be reminded not to touch the dog's head. The dog will attend training and socialisation classes. Any play which is resulting in the dog become over-excited will be stopped. All first aiders are aware of how to treat dog bites.	1	3	3	Y						
Dog gets irritable or distressed	N	Children and adults	2	2	4	If the dog is showing signs of being unwell she will not come into school. An adult will clear up the sick using cloths and the area will be disinfected afterwards.	1	2	2	Y						
Dog feeding	Y	Children and adults	2	3	6	If the dog is needing to be fed, this will happen in a room away from others.	1	3	3	Y						
Financial claim made following injury or illness caused by the dog	N	School	2	4	8	The dog will be insured as a working dog by its owner, Mr. Tuxworth. The school will be covered for public liability through the Local Authority insurance scheme.	1	4	4	Y						
Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date	Review Date
Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor	Signed Assessor