



Dallimore Primary and Nursery School School Dog Policy



Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. Some of the reasons are detailed within Appendix 1

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

There is a risk with **any** activity in school and there is no difference with having a dog on site. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be assessed and managed.

A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3). This is reviewed in line with this policy.

School Policy

This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present in order to ensure there is low risk of harm to either stakeholders or the dog (Ruby).

Background information:

- Ruby is owned by Mrs Crowther
- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog
- Ruby is the only dog that is allowed on the premises unless specific permission has been given
- Ruby is a Cockapoo, and this breed has been chosen because of their mild temperament and non-moulting coat

Management

- Staff, parents and children are aware that a dog will sometimes be in school and any concerns or worries about this are raised and dealt with as appropriate
- 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 may be a dog in school.
- If Ruby is ill she will not be allowed into school.
- Ruby 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 who is confident around dogs. She may be off the lead whilst on the field as this is a safe and enclosed space
- Children will be given reminders of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.

For example:

- remain calm around Ruby
 - not make sudden movements
 - not tease
 - not disturb if eating or asleep
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- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with Ruby.
 - If Ruby is surrounded by a large number of children, she could become nervous and agitated. Therefore the adult in charge must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
 - 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 Ruby is displaying any of these warning signs she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
 - Children should not eat close to Ruby.
 - Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
 - Parents' wishes to restrict their child's access to Ruby will be respected
 - The Headteacher or the office staff will know the whereabouts of Ruby and which staff are supervising at all times.
 - Ruby will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Rainsford, Miss Reynolds or Mrs Crowther

Health and Safety Principles

- Children will be told to wash their hands after handling Ruby
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately and children will not be allowed to do this, even if they offer
- Should a bite occur (even if playfully/ accidentally)
 - Parents will be contacted
 - The wound will be cleaned and covered as per first aid procedures
 - If necessary the child/ adult will be released for medical attention
 - All staff will be informed
 - An investigation will take place
 - The management of Ruby will be reassessed by the Headteacher/ governors

Actions

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

Date of Policy: **May 2022**

Next review: **May 2025**

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) Promote the release of Oxytocin (the love hormone) which improves well being and mental health

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 the school 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 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 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. Support 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 will be Mrs Crowther; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the insurance and 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 her temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact under strict supervision. The dog will also spend time in classrooms, Thrive room, library and outside where children can interact safely.

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 and a reputable dog behaviourist.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Mrs Crowther will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate basic behavioural Kennel Club training will be obtained.

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. 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.

Q How will the Ruby's welfare be considered?

A Ruby will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will be kept in the admin area/HT office and will only have planned and supervised contact with

children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have appropriate access to food and unlimited 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 Children 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 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 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 children do not need to have close contact with it unless they are happy to do this. 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.