

DOG POLICY

This version: November 2017

This policy applies to the school dog. The only other dogs permitted onto the school site are disability assistance dogs.

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, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. See Appendix 1.

The dog's role at Katharine Lady Berkeley's School

The dog's role will develop as he grows up but it is planned that he will be involved in the following activities:

- Time with one of the school counsellors
- Listening to children read in the library
- Working with children in the support room
- Spending time with classes which will benefit from the calm presence of a dog
- Working with staff who provide mentoring
- Spending time with tutor groups as part of a reward
- Spending time with the site team

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

There is always a risk. Like any other situation in a school in which an accident could occur, it is another risk that needs to be managed. The school has carried out a risk assessment which should be read in conjunction with this policy. This will be reviewed annually.

BACKGROUND

The dog will be owned by Hannah Khan. The dog is a Golden Retriever chosen for its temperament. The governing body agreed that the school can have a dog in school full time. Staff were informed via email and parents were informed via email and the school's newsletter. Parents were asked to advise the school if children are allergic or scared.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The dog will be based initially in the deputy headteacher's office, but gradually spend more time in other locations.
- His timetable is managed by Hannah Khan who holds the list of students with allergies.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- If the dog is ill he will not come into school. The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or when close to the school site.
- He will be under the supervision of an adult at all times.

Students have been reminded in assemblies at the start of the year and during the year about what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. In particular:

- Students should remain calm around the dog.
- Students should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
- Students should not go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating.
- Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students, the dog could become nervous and agitated in which case the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring 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 is displaying any of these warning signs he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog. Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

In the event of a fire alarm, if the dog is in the deputy headteacher's office, he will be collected by and taken to the assembly point for support staff by the identified member of the support staff. If he is in another location, it is the responsibility of the member of staff in charge, to take him to the assembly point.

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 to the Deputy Head.

Appendix 1

Reasons to have a dog in school:

Bullying can be a problem in all schools with pupils anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. Researchers report that pupils 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%.

Attendance Case Study: Mandy was a pupil 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.

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, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils 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.

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

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupil 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 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 pupils they mix with.

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 the classroom, 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.

As a reward: Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Pupils will be rewarded, as appropriate, with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog. 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 children'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, including bereavement, 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.

The wider community: Dogs can be a great way for to help pupils to interact with members of the wider community. For example, pupils may take the dog to visit other schools, hospitals or care homes and help others to benefit from this therapeutic support

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