



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. In addition to these benefits, children 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 this is included in this document (*see appendix 3*).

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

School Policy

- The dog will be owned by Naomi Knight
- 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 given prior permission.
- The dog is a Labrador from a reputable breeder chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children.

The school dog has been assessed to be a school dog by local assessor.

- The school will provide a risk assessment.
- 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 ill, he 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 a trained adult.
- Children will not be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog via an opt out agreement.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay

visitor issues to the Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher asap.

- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or SENCO.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the owner, Headteacher or a Deputy Head as soon as possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are 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. This can be achieved via assemblie, or using charities like the dog trust.

The legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs? The legal owner of the dog will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance for public liability/health and staff training costs where appropriate. The benefits of a school dog will be reviewed annually in the Summer term between the headteacher and the dog owner to see how it's working out /whether the arrangements need to be changed.

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 empathy and responsibility
- 3) Calming behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help prevent school refusing
- 8) Motivate children who are often less attentive
- 9) Promote a nurturing environment in school
- 10) Teach children to be empathetic individuals

The benefits of a school dog

Literacy benefits

“Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgmental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When

dogs are in a room of children trying to read, they become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgmental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading.” - Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

“Children who read to dogs are less likely to be embarrassed reading aloud and find the experience less stressful. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, and a higher desire to read and write.” - School Dog Policy – The White Horse Federation (<https://www.ridgewayschool.com/downloads/default/TWHF-School-Dog-Policy-V2.pdf>)

Therapy benefits

“Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also been shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment.” - School Dogs - Therapy Dogs Nationwide (<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

Attendance & punctuality benefits

“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.” - Case Study – Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

Behaviour & rewards

“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.”

- Hazel Oak School Dog Policy (<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

Appendix 2

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q *Is the dog from a reputable breeder?* Yes, he is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for his temperament.

Q *Will the dog be a distraction?*

The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children 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 outside area where children 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?* 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?* It will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training has been obtained from the dog's trust and from a registered dog trainer.

Q *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 outside. 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?* The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside when children are in lessons. Parents and carers will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog on a double lead. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in one of the SLT's offices 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 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?* 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/carers to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he 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?* Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with Rocket. We hope to work closely with parents/carers of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.