



School Dog Policy

Policy produced: June 2022

Review date: June 2024

To be approved by the Governing body: 6th July 2022

Introduction and Rationale

The value of “pet therapy” is widely accepted as a powerful aid to interaction and communication. The presence of companion animals can improve well-being and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, less forbidding and more enjoyable. There is increasing research that children can benefit immensely from getting to know a school dog, both educationally and emotionally. Contact with a dog increases their understanding of responsibility and helps develop empathy and nurturing skills.

It is very important that children are taught how to interact appropriately with animals they may meet. The context of our school community is that many families do not have pets at home and we’ve observed that some of our children can be very nervous around animals. Dogs in school are especially useful for teaching children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking, feeding and grooming. Children also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

In addition to these benefits, children show great enjoyment from interaction with a dog, and the dog can support their mental health and well-being. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the children they meet and is happy to provide plenty of hugs to the children they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring and accepting friend in a dog. One child after spending time with our school dog said, “Jackson made me feel better”.

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The dog, Jackson, is owned by the Head Teacher (Tamara Bennett). Jackson, is a Bedlington Terrier, who has been very well socialised and is used to young children. He is also well trained and has been awarded the Kennel Club Good Citizen obedience awards – Bronze, Silver and Gold. He is currently attending further training in Agility. Bedlington Terriers do not shed hair and so are less likely to set off allergic reactions. The Head Teacher will be responsible for the dog and ensure he is healthy, kept up to date with vaccinations and worming treatment.

The Governors are aware of the school dog on the premises and that the responsibility of the dog is with the Head Teacher.

Staff have been consulted about having a school dog and are fully on board. They receive training in the benefits, risks and management of having a dog in school.

Families will be informed via the Website and by ParentMail that a dog will be in school.

Protocol for School Dog:

- In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult supporting the dog will accompany the dog to the nearest fire evacuation point.
- Parents will inform the school of any allergies on admission.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance.
- If the dog is unwell, the dog will not come into school.
- The dog will normally 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 member of staff.

- There may be occasions when the dog is working off lead, but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult.
- Before removing the lead, all present will be informed.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and when the dog is present with children, there must be appropriate staff supervision at all times.
- Children should be first taught and then reminded of appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children should not put their face near the dog and should always approach the dog standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the staff member in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. A waggy tail, soft eyes and relaxed ears indicate a relaxed and happy dog. 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, the dog should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- The dog's welfare is extremely important and monitored carefully at all times. The dog has a base in the Head Teacher's office where he can rest and be quiet.
- Children must not eat close to the dog.
- Children must not feed the dog anything other than his designated treats.
- Children must always wash their hands after handling the dog. As a school we provide anti-bacterial hand wash.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by a member of staff.

Appendix A - Risk Assessment

Interacting with animals may not be appropriate for all children but for many, the experience has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with the school dog is invited to inform the Headteacher. There is little risk of disease associated with the dog as the Head Teacher is responsible for taking it to the Vet for all required vaccinations, including rabies, regular worming and flea treatment if needed. A copy of the health records will be provided if required.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff and the governing body.

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.	1	The dog will always be in the care of a responsible staff member and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.	June 2023
	Child scratched by dog.	3		
	Child bitten by dog	1	The dog is well trained and well socialised and has a calm temperament.	

			<p>Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.</p> <p>The dog will always be on a lead when not in the Headteacher's office while the children are in school.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and the expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure the dog is in good health and that the claws are kept short.</p>	
The dog causing allergies.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	<p>This dog breed (Bedlington Terrier) is known to be less likely to cause allergies as the dog coat is non shedding with no dander.</p> <p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to their child.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog to be made known to the Headteacher.</p> <p>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as they wish and those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.</p> <p>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.</p>	June 2023
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<p>The dog will be taken to toilet outside of the school or in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to.</p> <p>Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up immediately and dispose of it in a safe way.</p>	June 2023

			<p>All immunisations, worming and flea treatments are kept up to date.</p> <p>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at mealtimes; and never in the food preparation area.</p>	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep.	School unable to afford the ongoing cost of the day to day upkeep or medical bills.	1	<p>The dog is ultimately the responsibility of the Headteacher, both in a well-being and financial aspect, with no financial cost to the school anticipated.</p> <p>All veterinary costs are covered by the Headteacher.</p>	June 2023

Key:

1 Low risk of injury or harm

2

3 Medium risk of injury or harm

4

5 High risk of injury or harm