



School Dog Policy

March 2021

Next Review: July 2021

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. Interaction with a dog can also have a positive impact upon behaviour; children can have the opportunity to develop relationships with an animal, learn to take responsibility and as one of the school's de-escalation strategies. The benefits are outlined in greater detail in Appendix 1.

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 Local Governing Body are the decision making unit whether to accept or reject a proposal for a dog to be considered a school dog. The decision must formally be confirmed in the minutes of the Governing Body.
- A robust assessment process must be completed prior to a dog being considered suitable to be on-site. This must include a knowledgeable third party assessment and the completion of a risk assessment (see Appendix 3 for exemplar).
- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog should any concerns be raised. The school dog will not be allowed back onto the premises until the concern has been investigated.
- Only a school dog is allowed on the premises unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has given prior permission. No other dogs are allowed on-site, including during drop-off and collection times.
- Only dogs of Heronsgate staff will be considered as a School Dog.
- Office staff will inform all visitors on arrival that there is a dog in school and explain the related protocols. Any identified visitor issues will immediately be relayed to the Headteacher
- Staff, parents and children must be informed by letter that a dog will be in school. The letter must contain details of who is the legal owner and responsible for the dog on-site.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog via an opt out agreement. This also will include an opportunity to inform the school of any known dog allergies.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- If the dog is ill, it will not be allowed into school. The owner is responsible for not bringing the dog into school until it has completed a period of suitable recuperation.
- Children will not be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- 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 be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.

- o Children should remain calm.
 - o Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
 - o Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
 - o Children must wait until the dog is settled before touching or stroking it.
 - o Children should not eat close to the dog.
- The adult in charge of must ensure that ensure the dog is not overwhelmed by too many children in close proximity. If this occurs, the adult should either disperse the crowd or withdraw the dog from the situation.
 - Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
 - Named trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
 - The office will at all times keep a record of the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising.
 - The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of its owner or nominee approved by the Headteacher.

Actions

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

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. 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.

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 school refusing
- 8) 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, 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 anxiety. 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 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. 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 student 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, emergent 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 (FAQ's) - specifically relevant to School Dog Mabel

Q *Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?* The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Edwards; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q *Will the dog be a distraction?* The dog will be kept in Mrs Edwards's 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 and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library 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 and a reputable dog behaviourist.

Q *Who is responsible for training?* Mrs Edwards is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training has been obtained and the dog has worked towards being trained as a Therapy Dog through Canine Concerns.

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 of school and only 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 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 during lunchtime. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's Office or the Administration office 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. Regular rest breaks will be part of the dog's timetable to ensure she does not become overwhelmed.

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 to put additional

control measures in place for individual allergies. School dog's coat is 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?*** Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with School dog. 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.

Q ***My child does not want to be in the room if the school dog is present. How will this be managed?*** If a child is known to be concerned or if it has been requested by a parent that a child is not in the same room as the dog, for example for an assembly or in a classroom, normal protocols will be followed, they will be supervised in another room by an adult and an alternative relevant activity will take place.

APPENDIX 3

Exemplar Risk assessment and knowledgeable third party assessment

Please see the [School Dog Risk Assessment 2021](#)