



# School Dog Policy

Review cycle	1 / 2 / 3 years	
Approved/Adopted by	Full Governing Body / Executive Headteacher	Date: September 2022
Changes made in this review cycle	<b>September 2022</b> Wording update to account for the dog's age/training needs and adjustments to where the dog spends the day in school	
Linked policies:	Attendance Policy Behaviour and Discipline Policy	
Signed	<i>Alan Dandle</i>	Date: September 2022
Date of next Review	September 2023	

## **Rationale**

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Reading Dogs are being used to help children develop fluency in reading and Therapy Dogs provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues. Increasingly in schools, and certainly at St Mary the Virgin, it is recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom. A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children with trouble managing their behaviour could learn to care for the dog and the dog could be helpful in de-escalating anger. Reading dogs can help boost children's confidence and fluency. Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion. Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

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

This policy shows how we have thought carefully about school life with a pet dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

### Context:

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Bastin – Co-Head of School.
- Veterinary costs, insurance and any additional costs will be paid by the owner.
- The Leadership team, staff and Governors have agreed that a school dog would bring many benefits to St Mary the Virgin Primary school
- Pupils are very keen to have a dog on site and previously had visits from a 'Pets As Therapy' dog
- Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals, individual care plans will be set up
- The risk assessment (attached) is reviewed annually
- Visitors and students will be informed of the dog at reception.

## **Preparations for having a School Dog**

Having a dog in school is a big step and the arrangement needs to work for all groups in our school community. School leaders have taken advice from schools who currently have a school dog, Dogs' Trust and Pets as Therapy organisers, who have provided guidance about the necessary risk assessments and insurance that we will need to put in place, as well as practical guidance, such as allocating a dog toilet area well away from anywhere the children will access. In order to ensure that the dog would be beneficial to the children's learning and wellbeing and not be a distraction, we will plan when and where the children will interact with the dog.

If any child is allergic to dog hair, we make sure that they do not come into close contact with the dog if parents request it. Likewise, if a child has a phobia of dogs we will keep the dog away from them, or we can offer opportunities for the child to be slowly introduced to the dog, to reduce their fear. Parents are invited to contact the Head of School if either of these cases apply, so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

## **Benny**

Our school dog is Benny, who is also Mrs Bastin's pet. Benny is a Labrador/Curly-Coated Retriever cross and was born on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019. His breed was chosen as it is a type used by the charity Guide Dogs, combining the trainability of Labradors with the people-centred, gentle nature of Retrievers. He also has short, easily maintainable fur and is regularly groomed to keep shedding to a minimum. Benny had lots of early socialisation with children and other dogs at the home of his breeder, Mrs Bastin's family and regular days with a Dog Walker. He has regular check-ups at the vet and has up to date vaccinations, flea and worming treatment.

## **Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog**

Parents and carers are informed that there is a school dog and can request that their children do not have contact with the dog. There will always be a responsible adult in charge of the dog during interactions with children.

Children and adults are required to adhere to the following:

- Always approach Benny calmly and slowly
- Never run up to him
- Offer the back of your hand for Benny to sniff when meeting him

- All interactions must remain calm with the authorised adult in control at all times
- Children must wash their hands before eating if they have been stroking Benny.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*What will the school dog do on a day-to-day basis?*

The dog would be based in the Headteacher's office or in Lilac Class but will be involved in various aspects of the school day – e.g. in classrooms, hearing readers, supporting children with SMEH needs. The children will be involved in walking him at lunch times and assisting with his training and care needs.

*How do I know that my child will be safe around the dog?*

A risk assessment and policy are in place and available on the school website. These are both reviewed annually by the Head of School. The dog is covered by public liability insurance. Children will only have contact with the dog when supervised by an adult and with permission from their parents.

*Will my child pick up infections from the dog?*

The dog will be fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and will be kept away from the school if it is ill. Children will be required to wash their hands if they have been stroking him. There will be a dedicated dog toilet area away from areas that children access and no child will be asked to pick up dog mess.

*What if my child is allergic to dogs or afraid of them?*

Parents can request that their child has no contact, or restricted access to the dog in these situations. Please speak to Mrs Bastin to discuss any concerns.

## **Reasons to have a dog in school:**

Reading confidence: 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 students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in the classroom, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking, grooming and their daily care. 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 to one basis and will especially help those students who have been going through upsetting or difficult times or even nervous 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 an assuring friend in a dog.

Attendance: Many schools have reported improved attendance of their children and families as the children are keen to meet the dog on the playground. Some schools are also using dogs to improve behaviour difficulties by promoting positive behaviour in students.

## SCHOOL DOG RISK ASSESSMENT

<b>Workplace</b>	St Mary the Virgin CEP	<b>Likelihood (L)</b>	X	<b>Severity (S)</b>
<b>Department</b>	N/A	Almost Impossible	1	Insignificant (minor injury, no time off)
<b>Risk Assessor</b>	Becca Hare	Unlikely	2	Minor (injury and up to 7 days off)
<b>Room/Area</b>	Whole school	Possible	3	Moderate (injury causing more than 7 days off)
<b>Activity/Task</b>	School pet – therapy/reading dog.	Likely	4	Major (death or serious injury)
<b>Date</b>	<b>September 2021</b>	Almost Certain	5	Catastrophic (multiple deaths)
<b>Benefit of activity</b>	Nurture, intervention, well-being, therapy, reading, attendance.	Low = 1-8	Medium = 9-14	High = 15-25

	What are the significant, foreseeable, hazards? <i>(the dangers that can cause harm)</i>	Who is at Risk?	Current control measures <i>(What is already in place/done)</i>	Risk Rating			What additional control measures can be put in place to reduce the risk further?	Revised Risk Rating		
				L	S	R		L	S	R
1.	Unsuitable animals being brought into/kept at school	Pupils Staff Volunteers Visitors	Obtain puppy from reputable breeder – breeder researched and Head of School met both parents, other puppies in litter and visited the home twice. Puppy specifically chosen for its calm and gentle nature in comparison to others viewed.	2	2	3	Pupils are encouraged not to bring animals found in the wild (alive or dead/injured) into school. If school dog attempts to do this, dispose of in humane and ethical manner.	1	1	1




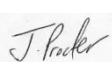
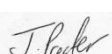
2.	Neglect of animals and their welfare		<p>Head of School owns the dog and is in the care of a Dog Walker or family when he is not in school. He lives in the HOS's house.</p> <p>Dog is walked twice daily and has constant access to fresh water.</p> <p>The RSPCA's 'Animal Friendly Schools' guidance is followed to ensure compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and best practice</p> <p>Do not allow dog to wander unsupervised around classrooms – he is in the heads' office and there is a gate on the office door to ensure he does not wander around unsupervised during school hours.</p> <p>The dog will be introduced in staggered method to ensure chn and dog are not anxious and build up trust.</p> <p>If dog shows signs of anxiety (whining, barking, tail between legs, ears flat, cowering etc) he will be removed from the situation that is making him nervous.</p> <p>During school holidays, the dog continues to live with HOS as a pet.</p>	2	3	6	<p>School policy written detailing rationale, advice, requirements and procedures for having the dog in school.</p> <p>Animals must be properly housed – lives with HOS and has own bed/water bowl in office.</p> <p>Visits to classrooms/busy places kept short (20mins max.) and with owner or SEND TA</p>	1	3	3
3.	Animal waste/food; poor hygiene		<p>Hygiene procedures are in place and pupils supervised to ensure they happen e.g. after touching the dog, pupils wash their hands with soap and warm water under adult supervision</p> <p>Dog's bedding is washed fortnightly.</p> <p>Safe storage of dog food to prevent unauthorised access and vermin – food and treats to be in the head's office securely stored.</p> <p>Dog is not be allowed to lick pupil's faces.</p> <p>The dog will be taken for toilet breaks in an area not used by children and properly cleaned up after.</p> <p>When walking the dog, chn and adults will change into suitable shoes and hands should be washed after the footwear is changed</p>	2	2	4	<p>After accidental contact with faeces or urine it is washed off immediately</p> <p>Dog is fully house trained but any accidents will be immediately cleaned up with proper cleaning products (COSHH compliant).</p>	1	2	2
4.	Lack of awareness of pupils/staff with allergies		<p>All dog food is nut and allergen free.</p> <p>Chn with allergies do not come into close contact with dog.</p> <p>Procedure in place to ensure that affected pupils/staff are not exposed to known allergens e.g. the protein in a pet's dander, saliva or urine</p>	2	4	8	<p>Permission gained for all chn to work with the dog.</p> <p>Dog's fur is short and brushed weekly to keep maintained.</p>	2	2	4

5.	Sharp claws/teeth		Pupils are instructed in the safe handling of the dog to avoid injury.	2	2	4	Teeth and claws are regularly checked by the vet (annually) to ensure they are safe.	2	1	2
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**Action Plan (when will the above additional control measures be implemented and by whom?)**

Action	By Whom?	Deadline	Date Completed
Reminders in assembly and introductions with new children taken place.	Becca Hare	21/09/20	
Updated school policy written and shared with stakeholders.	Becca Hare	21/09/20	
Updated school policy written and shared with stakeholders.	Becca Hare	28/09/21	
Updated school policy written and shared with stakeholders.	Becca Bastin	25/11/22	

**Signature and review**

<b>Name of Manager:</b>	Becca Hare - HOS	<b>Signature of Manager:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	01/11/19
<b>1<sup>st</sup> review undertaken on:</b>	30/11/19	<b>Signature of Manager:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	30/11/19
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> review undertaken on:</b>	07/09/20	<b>Signature of Manager:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	07/09/20
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> review undertaken on:</b>	28/09/21	<b>Signature of Manager:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	28/09/21
<b>4<sup>th</sup> review undertaken on:</b>	25/11/22	<b>Signature of Manager:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	25/11/22

**SCHOOL DOG WALKING RISK ASSESSMENT**

What are the significant, foreseeable, hazards? (the dangers that can cause harm)	Who is at Risk?	Current control measures (What is already in place/done)	Risk Rating			What additional control measures can be put in place to reduce the risk further?	Revised Risk Rating		
			L	S	R		L	S	R
1. Safety and handling of the dog	Pupils Staff	Two leads will be used so an adult always has overall control of the dog. Staff member will always have overall control of the dog. Staff member will be familiar to the dog. If dog unwell, he will not be in school. Dog well socialised so used to interacting with other dogs on walks. Immediately put on a lead if approaching dog is on a lead, for own and others' safety. Recall of the dog is good.	2	2	4	Dog is trained to walk appropriately on and off the lead. Dog will be checked over after each walk to ensure no injuries sustained. Dog trained to leave cyclists/other walkers alone The dog will only be let off the lead if there are no livestock in the vicinity. Route is decided upon what time of year it is (e.g. if The Croft is too muddy, or there are livestock in some of the fields).	1	2	2
2. Cleaning up after the dog		No child will ever clean up dog mess. Staff member present will do this.	1	1	2				

3.	Safety of the children	<p>Consent forms for children will be obtained. The route will be familiar one to the adults walking. Ratio of adult to child will be appropriate for age group of children. For Year 3, this is 1:6 and for Years 4 – 6 this is 1:15. The adult to child ratio will be determined by the group of children walking – sometimes another adult will accompany walks as an extra adults but sometimes this will just be Mrs Bastin. Children will cross road at the crossing near the bus stop and be reminded of rules of safe crossing before going each day. Only children in KS2 will be involved in walking to ensure they can complete the route in half an hour. The children will all change footwear and have appropriate clothing. In very heavy rain or strong winds, the children will not accompany the dog.</p>	2	2	4	<p>All children and staff to wear Hi-vis vests. Staff member to take mobile phone so can be communicated any time.</p>	1	2	2
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Routes (to be decided on a day-to-day basis depending on the weather and season):

