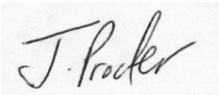





School Dog Policy

Document Name	School Dog policy	
Review cycle	1/2/3 years	
Reviewed by	SLT/HT/HOS/SENDSCO/SL	
Approved/Adopted by	FGB/Lead governor/Headteacher	Date: December 2024
Changes made in this review cycle	12/12/24 – changes made following an incident at SMV and following discussions at FGB meeting 3 rd December 2024	
Linked policies:	Attendance Policy Behaviour and Discipline Policy	
Signed	 Executive Headteacher  Chair of Governors	Date: December 2024
Date of next Review	December 2025	

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 Church of England Primary School, 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 remain with its owner at all times.
- The owner is a staff member whose dog has passed the relevant dog training to work in a school
- Veterinary costs, insurance and any additional costs are provided and paid for by the owner.
- The Leadership team, staff and Governors have agreed that a school dog would bring many benefits to St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary school
- Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals, individual plans will be set up
- The risk assessment (attached) is reviewed annually
- Visitors will be informed of the dog being in attendance when signing in 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 and Canine Concern Care 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.

We have one school dog called Indie.

Indie is a 4 year old black Cockapoo. Indie has been with Mrs T and her family since she was a puppy. She is an extremely friendly, affectionate, happy dog who loves to be stroked and thrives on social interaction. One of her favourite things to do is to chase a ball and after a busy day she loves to chill! She is fully insured, which means she has public liability insurance. She has regular check-ups at the vet and has up to date vaccinations, flea and worming treatment. Her interactions with children will be timetabled and supervised by Mrs T (owner) and designated handlers in the school.

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. Indie's owner or designated handlers will always be in attendance during any interactions.

Children and adults are required to adhere to the following:

- Always approach Indie calmly and slowly
- Never approach directly face to face with the dog
- Never run up to her/him
- Never crowd around
- Offer your hand to stroke under rather than holding it over the dogs head
- All interactions must remain calm with the owner or handlers in control at all times
- Children must wash their hands before eating if they have been stroking Indie
- If the dog shows signs of anxiety (whining, barking, tail between legs, ears flat, cowering etc) they will be removed from the situation that is making them nervous.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

The dog will be timetabled for its session in school. The dog may see children on a 1:1 basis, visit different classes to listen to readers with a member of staff or help with particular projects, such as learning about caring for animals.

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 a member of staff and the dog's owner 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 her. 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 Robinson 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. 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. Some schools are also using dogs to improve behaviour difficulties by promoting positive behaviour in students.

SCHOOL DOG RISK ASSESSMENT

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

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.	Unsuitable animals being brought into/kept at school	Pupils Staff Volunteers Visitors	<p>The dogs have been approved by a veterinary nurse and Canine Concern Care organisation.</p> <p>Reminders are sent to parents that other dogs/pets are not allowed on school property.</p> <p>Pupils are reminded not to bring animals found in the wild (alive or dead/injured) into school. If the school dog attempts to do this, we will dispose of in humane and ethical manner.</p>	2	2	4				
2.	Neglect of animals and their welfare	Pupils Staff Volunteers Visitors	<p>The school dog will always be in the care of its owner and always on a lead.</p> <p>Dog will be in school sessions for no longer than one hour at a time and will have 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>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) they will be removed from the situation that is making them nervous.</p> <p>School policy written detailing rationale, advice, requirements and procedures for having the dog in school</p> <p>Visits to classrooms/busy places kept short (20mins max.) and with owner and staff member.</p>	1	3	3				

3.	Animal waste/food; poor hygiene	Pupils Staff Volunteers Visitors	<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 food and treats kept on owner's person.</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 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>	2	2	4				
4.	Lack of awareness of pupils/staff with allergies	Pupils Staff Volunteers Visitors	<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> <p>Permission gained for all chn to work with the dog.</p>	2	2	4				
5.	Sharp claws/teeth	Pupils Staff Volunteers Visitors	<p>Pupils are instructed in the safe handling of the dog to avoid injury. Teeth and claws are regularly checked by the vet (twice annually) to ensure they are safe.</p>	2	2	4				

Action Plan (when will the above additional control measures be implemented and by whom?)

Action	By Whom?	Deadline	Date Completed

Signature and review

Name of Manager:	Jane Robinson	Signature of Manager:	<i>Jane Robinson</i>	Date:	
1st review undertaken on:		Signature of Manager:		Date:	
2nd review undertaken on:		Signature of Manager:		Date:	
3rd review undertaken on:		Signature of Manager:		Date:	

SCHOOL DOG WALKING RISK ASSESSMENT

W o r k p l a c e	St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School	Likelihood (L)		X	Sev erit y (S)	
D e p a r t m e n t	N/A	Almost Impossible		1	Insig nific ant (min or injur y, no time off)	
Ri sk A ss es so r	Jane Robinson	Unlikely		2	Min or (inju ry and up to 7 days off)	
R o o m / A r e a	School Field	Possible		3	Mo dera te (inju ry caus ing more than 7 days off)	
A ct iv it y/ T as k	Walking school dog	Likely		4	Maj or (dea th or seri ous injur y)	
D a t e	April 2024	Almost Certain		5	Cata stro phic (mul tiple deat hs)	
B e n	Nurture, well-being, therapy, attendance.	Low = 1-8	Medium = 9-14			H i g h

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2nd review undertaken on:		Signature of Manager:		Date:	

3 rd review undertaken on:		Signature of Manager:		Date:	
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