

Policy:	School Dog Policy and Risk Assessment
Policy Date:	AUTUMN 2024
Review Cycle:	YEARLY
Reviewer:	HEADTEACHER
Approved:	AUTUMN 2024
Next Review:	AUTUMN 2025

Introduction

Studies have shown that there are a wide variety of benefits for children to have access to a school dog. Children are able to learn how to care for the dog, they learn the principles of good pet ownership and will be taught how to interact and handle dogs safely and responsibly. They will take great enjoyment from their interactions with the dog and it is a wonderful opportunity to grow their social and emotional development, especially as the dog will be owned by our school ELSA/Drawing and Talking Practitioner. These benefits are the main factors as to why the school team feel a school dog will be of such value to our school community.

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

Of course there is, however 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 effectively.

School Policy

The dog will be owned by our LSA Mrs Blythe, who is qualified in animal assisted therapy, animal communication and has worked in previous therapeutic animal setting. The puppy (Loki) was chosen for a variety of reasons, firstly his breed a Labrador cross which are known for their calm and placid nature and ability to learn, he also has a non-moulting hypoallergenic coat which reduces the risk of allergies. Prior to purchasing Loki, Mrs Blythe met Loki's parents as well as some puppies from previous litters to gauge his temperament and suitability for work with children. Both of Loki's parents are trained school therapy dogs and he has therefore been trained as such since his birth. Mrs Blythe continues to have regular contact with the breeder, who is a therapy dog trainer. Mrs Blythe and Loki are also undertaking external training with another local highly qualified trainer to ensure his successful transition.

Loki will live with Mrs Blythe and her family in their home, at their own expense. There are no diseases that could be caught from the dog and he will be kept up-to-date with immunisations including rabies, and worming treatment as in line with European vet guidelines. A register of his annual health check will be kept both by Mrs Blythe and the vet's surgery. It is Mrs Blythe's responsibility to ensure these are kept up to date. He will also have adequate health insurance which Mrs Blythe will have a copy of.

The decision to obtain Loki was discussed by Headteacher, Zoe Doyle and Mrs Blythe and agreed by Chair of Governors, Sarah Addison. All staff and parents were informed prior to the

purchase of the Loki that we would be having a dog and a survey was sent out to all parents to gauge their reaction. It was overwhelmingly in favour of a school dog.

We currently have no children attending the setting with allergies but this will be minimised by the dog being in a controlled area. Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents and Visitors are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.

Prior to his arrival, staff have been given the opportunity to meet and interact with the dog and Loki will be introduced to the school environment and children gradually for the wellbeing of all involved.

The dog will normally be kept on a lead and harness until fully trained when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an appropriate adult. 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 consulted. Students will never be left alone with the dog and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students.

Students will be reminded of what is appropriate behavior around the dog. Students should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Students should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Students should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students, the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.

Dogs express their feelings through their body language. 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 he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment. Mrs Blythe will provide training on this to all pupils and staff.

At the start of each academic year there will be lessons around the school dog, the correct way to interact with dogs and this will be facilitated by outside charities as well as during school assemblies by our staff and in our PHSE curriculum.

Children/Staff and Visitors should not feed or eat close to the dogs.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti-bacterial gel.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

Parents will be given an opportunity to speak to the head with regards to the school dog. The school has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.

Any parent who do not wish their child to interact with the puppy is invited to write to inform Mrs Doyle of their wishes but parents should be aware Loki will be present for whole school activities such as school Worship.

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 and children are required to abide by this policy.

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Policy written 02/09/2024

Policy to be reviewed 02/09/2025

Appendix A: Risk assessment

Hazard	Risk	Risk 1 - 5	Controls in place	Review date
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.	1	<p>The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.</p> <p>Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.</p> <p>The dog will always be on a lead or carried when he is not in the school office whilst the children are in school.</p> <p>Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PSHE sessions.</p> <p>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them and will under no circumstances chase the dog.</p> <p>Pupils will be shown the correct, safe way to interact and play with Loki by experienced staff.</p> <p>The dog will undergo formal training from an external trainer as well as continuing training from Mrs Blythe who is trained in animal assisted therapy and animal communication.</p>	
	Child scratched by dog.	3		
	Child bitten by dog.	3		



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			<p>Risk of scratching and biting will reduce as Loki ages, and the risk assessment will be reviewed as he matures and progresses through his training.</p> <p>All staff will have been introduced to the dog and expectations of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure she is in good health and that her claws are kept short.</p>	
The dog causing allergies. Including causing a reaction from our pupil who has an airborne allergy to fish.	Children or staff have allergic reactions	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school.</p> <p>A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will kept in school.</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> <p>The dog is a non-moulting breed and is hypoallergenic reducing this risk.</p> <p>Loki will not have any fish products (treats/food) for 24 hours before he is in the school setting to minimise the risk of causing a reaction.</p>	
Children getting germs from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	<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> <p>Loki is being trained to toilet in an area of the grounds that children have limited access to. The area will be disinfected as required.</p> <p>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the European Pet Passport Scheme and a record will be kept of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at monthly</p>	

			<p>intervals.</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 Loki's day to day upkeep or medical bills.	1	<p>The dog is ultimately the responsibility of Mrs Blythe both in a well-being and financial aspect.</p> <p>All vets and training costs are covered by Mrs Blythe</p>	
Fire Alarm	Injury to staff or animal during a fire evacuation.	3	The adult responsible for the dog at the time of the alarm will ensure he is taken to the assembly point.	
Children distracted by Noise/Barking		2	<p>The dog will be introduced gradually to the setting to ease his stress, therefore reducing barking.</p> <p>Continued positive reinforcement training will reduce barking over time as the dog matures.</p> <p>The dog will mainly be in an area which is not near to classrooms and will therefore cause less distraction.</p>	
Dog Phobias	Distress caused by close proximity to the dog	4	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school if their child is scared to be in close contact with the dog.</p> <p>Parents will be offered a programme of support for child to help overcome aversion if needed.</p> <p>Parents also offered the option of their child having no close contact. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept by the office staff.</p> <p>Visitors will be advised that a dog is in the head's office and removed if requested.</p> <p>Notice on school entrance and Headteachers office informing people that we have a dog onsite.</p>	
Injury to other school pets	Other school pets being	2	Ensure that the school dog and any other school pets are kept separate at	

	injured by school dog		all times, if the school rabbit is in school. Loki must not be allowed into the Oak classroom.	
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KEY:

- 1- Low risk
- 2
- 3 -Medium risk of injury
- 4
- 5-High risk of injury

Appendix B
Reasons to have a dog in school

Behaviour

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

Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, 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. This is particularly relevant as Mrs Blythe is the school ELSA and therefore, once trained he will become a valuable part of the SEMH progression of the school.

As a reward

Dogs will be gentle and living, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. In the future it is a possibility that he could be used for 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, may 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 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.

Reading

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 practice 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 interpersonal skills among the students they mix with. Bullying can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. 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 participation students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%

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