

School Dog Policy

Little Acorns School



Growth Learning Therapies

Approved by: Barbara Dansey

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1.1 Purpose

Children will be able to 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 research has shown that children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

2. Scope

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 truancy
- 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 because of having a dog at school.

Attendance:

Some children find entering the school day a daunting exercise which can lead to refusal to engage for the rest of the day. The dog can help to distract, calm, and engage the child thereby motivating them into starting the day positively.

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. "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 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, 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, using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. The dog can help older pupils communicate, express and show kindness, learn empathy whilst developing their nurturing skills. With a dog in school, pupils 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 pupils 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 responsibility's 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. Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have struggled with friendships, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils 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.

3. Policy Statement



Dog 1: Sunny

The dog is owned by Alison Neal (Head Teacher) and is called Sunny. The dog will attend school alongside Alisons working hours a few days each month. Sunny is fully vaccinated in accordance with the specific area needs. Alison has private insurance for the dog's health and well-being. The dog is also covered through a working dogs

liability insurance.



Dog 2: Popsy

The dog is owned by Emily Porter (Thrive and LSA) and is called Popsy. The dog will attend school alongside Emily 3 days a week. Popsy is fully vaccinated in accordance with the specific area needs. Popsy is in training to become a school therapy dog and is a member of Canine Assisted Learning group. She is overseen by dog behaviorist termly. Emily Porter and Joanna Curley are her designated handlers. Emily has insurance for the dog's health and

well-being. The dog is also covered through a working dogs liability insurance through Canine Assisted Learning group.

Dog 3: Lola



The dog is owned by Joanna Curley (Deputy Head Teacher) and is called Lola. The dog will attend school alongside Jo's working hours once a week. Lola is fully vaccinated in accordance with the specific area needs. Jo has private insurance for the dog's health and well-being. The dog is also covered through a working dogs liability insurance.

- The dogs have a good level of training undertaken by Alison, Jo and Emily and additional 'training' by a trained professional. Popsy is being trained by guidance from Canine Assisted Learning group, to become a fully qualified school therapy dog.

Emily and Joanna have attended specific dogs in school's training led by Canine Assisted Learning group, focusing on how the dogs should be used in school, dog welfare and body language awareness.

Only one dog will be on the premises per day.

- Only the school dog's are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.

- Dog 1 is a Whippet, dog 2 is a sproodle (springer spaniel crossed with a poodle), dog 3 is a cockapoo (cocker spaniel crossed with a poodle). All these dogs have been chosen because they have a good temperament, responds well to training and is known to be good with children. They are very sociable and friendly dogs. They are known to be quieter dogs.

- Staff, parents, and children have been informed by letter that dogs will be in school. Alison has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by Governance. This will be reviewed annually.

- Staff, visitors, and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dogs. A list of people allergic will be maintained. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school with a sign placed in reception.
- If any of the dogs are poorly, they will not be allowed into school, until they are well, at least 48 hours after illness.
- 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 via an extended therapy dog lead, allowing children to hold a shorter lead.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

Children must abide by the “school’s dog rules” at all times, or access to the dog will cease until they can follow the rules appropriately.

- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children 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. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, 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 bearing 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.
- Children should not eat close to the dog and the dog will not be permitted to enter children’s places of eating.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. A specified area within the school grounds has been identified to ensure that the children do not come into contact with faeces.
- Parents will be consulted on induction allowing their pupils access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Headteacher asap.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.

Each dog will have a timetable of tasks, to ensure they are getting the appropriate amount of play / rest / work.

Each dog has a designated safe space away from the children so they can rest and sleep uninterrupted.

- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Alison Neal or other adult member of staff.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

The SLT 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.

Alison Neal, Jo Curley and Emily Porter have sole responsibility for their dogs with equipment/resources and any additional training provided by the school.

5. Implementation

A thorough risk assessment has been carried out. Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times.

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.