



Learning that Connects

## School Pet Policy

**Policy date:** September 2020

**Review date:** September 2022

**Chair of Governors:** David Smith

**Governors Approval:**

## **Introduction**

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of students and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

Students can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog/s. In addition to these benefits, students take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. By having dogs we want to encourage those students specifically who are vulnerable, or those who are less confident to look forward to the interaction with Bluebell and Bentley! The dogs are well-cared for and responsibly owned by two staff members.

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

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

#### **Context:**

- The dogs are owned by Ms Wigham, Principal and Ms Jasper, Administrator
- Veterinary costs will be paid by the owner.
- Bluebell is a Jack Russell chosen for its very mild temperament and non-molting coat. It is hypoallergenic.
- Bentley is a Cavapoo also chosen for its very mild temperament, happy, affectionate dogs that loves children and other dogs.
- The Principal and Governors have agreed that Therapy Dogs would bring many benefits to Studio West School.
- The vast majority of pupils are very keen to have two small dogs on site; most parents/carers are delighted. Where there are any concerns or fears expressed by individuals, a care plan will be set up.
- The risk assessment is reviewed annually.
- Visitors and students will be informed of the dog upon arrival.

### **Day-to-Day Management**

#### **The dog will:**

- Not be allowed into school if unwell.
- Be carried or kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk.
- Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times.
- Have had all injections prior to joining Studio West.
- Never be taken off the site by pupils.

#### **Pupils will:**

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with, the dogs.
- Meet the dog in a group of no more than 3 students.
- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs every time they meet them:
  - Always remain calm around the dogs.
  - Don't make sudden movements, be gentle.
  - Don't stare into a dog's eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat.
  - Don't put your face near a dog.
  - Always approach the dog standing up.
  - Do not disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
  - Not eat close to the dog and never feed the dog.

- Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicates 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.

### **Health and Safety Principles**

The following health and safety principles:

- Student will always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the dog's owner. Student must never attempt to do this.

### **Should a bite (even playful) occur:**

- Parents will be contacted immediately.
- The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.
- The pupil/adult will be released for a medical attention.
- All staff will be informed.
- A full investigation into the circumstance will be led by the Principal.
- The suitability of the dog will be re-assessed by the Governors.

## **Appendix 1: Reasons to have a dog in school:**

### ***Some anecdotes***

#### **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 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.

#### **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 student's social skills and self-esteem.

#### **Risk Assessment**

##### **Introduction**

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It is a requirement for both dogs to be within the following recommended guidelines:

- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Pets that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed in the school premises until their health is restored.
- All animals should have received relevant inoculations.
- All animals should be wormed regularly every six months.
- Claws should be kept trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches.
- Pets should have been exercised before being allowed to work with children.
- All pets should have their coats cleaned regularly.

The dog owners have the responsibility to ensure that:

- Dogs are physically fit before visiting the school environment.
- Dogs are kept on a lead throughout the visit/work.
- They remain with the dog at all times.
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking.
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard, i.e. not wet, muddy etc.
- Natural relief for dogs is taken into account prior to visiting.



Hazard	Risk	Risk 1-5*	Likelihood 1-5*	Risk	Controls in place	Review date & signed
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children	Pupil knocked to ground	1	2	2	<p>The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises.</p> <p>Children are not left with the dog unsupervised.</p> <p>The dog will always be on a lead when he is out of his pen/ the Head's office, except when he is undergoing structured training with his primary trainer/s.</p> <p>The dog will undergo formal training from the age of 12 weeks with an experienced local trainer. Some pupils will be involved in both on and off site training (with parental permissions) and along with the schools' primary handlers, continue to reinforce positive training strategies in a controlled area throughout the week.</p> <p>The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school classroom environment, this area of training will allow future reading or nurture intervention to involve the school dog in a calming/therapeutic manner.</p> <p>Risk of scratching will reduce and the risk assessment will be reviewed as the dog progresses through his weekly training programme.</p> <p>ALL staff have been introduced to the dog and the expectations (do's and don'ts) of having a school dog.</p> <p>The dog will attend the vets' regularly to make sure his claws are kept short and that he is in good health.</p>	September 2022
	Pupil scratched by dog	3	2	2.5		
	Pupil bitten by dog	4	2	3		
Dog hair causing allergies	Children have allergic reactions	1	1	1	<p>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept on the school recording system (SIMS.net).</p> <p>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 have been taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.</p>	September 2022
Children getting	Children/s staff will	1	1	1	Should the dog defecate on the school site a member of staff will clear this up	September 2022

germs from the dog.	contract diseases that can be carried by dogs				<p>immediately and dispose of it in a safe manner. The dog will be trained to toilet in an area of the school that our pupil's don't have access to on a regular basis, if required the area will then be disinfected with an appropriate animal disinfectant. All immunisations (including rabies vaccination) are kept up to date in accordance with European Pet Passport scheme and the Head Teacher keeps a register of this.</p> <p>Flea treatment is carried out at 6 weekly intervals.</p> <p>Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet guidelines, at 6 monthly intervals</p> <p>The dog will not go in the school dining hall at meal times; he will not be permitted into the food preparation area of the kitchen.</p>	
Financial cost of the dog's upkeep	School unable to afford ongoing cost of the dog's day to day upkeep or medical bills	1	1	1	<p>The dog is the responsibility of Ms Wigham / Ms Jasper, they are financially responsible for all their care and day to day costs.</p> <p>The dogs are the responsibility of Ms Wigham and Ms Jasper outside of school hours.</p>	September 2022
Claim is made against school re: behaviour of the dog.	School not adequately covered financially	1	1	1	<p>Ms Wigham or Ms Jasper, via Pet Insurance, insures the dog.</p> <p>The certificate is kept in school office and is renewed annually in April.</p>	September 2022

**KEY:**

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