



## Orchard Partnership Academies

# School Dog Policy



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Mr Alex Davies

# School Dog Policy

## Introduction

This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having a school dog at Stretton Sugwas C of E Academy.

We strongly believe that the well-being of our pupils is equally as important as their education and that it is very important to provide our young people with a range of therapeutic sources to support their development and progress. We believe there is significant potential for dogs to help young people in a range of educational environments, bringing benefits to their academic, emotional and social development. These benefits can include but are not exclusive to:

## Emotional

Evidence suggests a school dog can potentially improve self-esteem, acceptance from others and lift mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Students can identify with animals and have empathy with the dog, and so they may better understand how their peers may feel.

## Cognitive

Companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing. Dogs have also been used successfully in reading programmes, as students develop literacy skills and build confidence through both the calming effect the dog's presence has on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgmental or critical. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, which is especially crucial to struggling and reluctant readers. Research also suggests 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.

*"Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room of children trying to read they become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgmental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading."*

- Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

## **Social**

A dog can provide a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. Working with dogs can help students to learn about negative and positive reinforcement, about body language and social cues and boundaries. Students could potentially have the opportunity to learn how to care for the dog, including walking and grooming. Research suggests that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care.

## **Physical and Sensory**

Interaction with a dog potentially helps reduce blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy and risk assessment for dogs in school. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

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

There are a variety of accidents that can occur within a school environment on a daily basis and these far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, as with any risk, a thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document.

Additionally, there is also the risk of compromised welfare of the dog: the school environment can be a very busy, noisy and unpredictable place; studies suggest that environmental and social stress leads to increased irritability in dogs, increasing the risk of an injury and incident. Therefore, the physical and emotional welfare of the dog will be of the highest priority, as demonstrated in this policy.

## Consent form sent to Parents on Parent Mail

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick as appropriate:

- I am happy for my child to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.
- My child is a little nervous of dogs, but I am happy for him/her to be involved with all aspects of caring for the school dog, including supervised lunchtime walks.
- My child is fearful of dogs, but in time, I would like them to work with the dog to develop their confidence with and understanding dogs.
- My child has an allergy which means they must not come into contact with the dog o I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog
- I do not give permission for my child to come into direct contact with the dog

### School Dog FAQ's

#### **Q. Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?**

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Grieve and she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog: the school budget will support liability insurance.

#### **Q. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A. Yes.

#### **Q. Who is responsible for training?**

A. Mrs Grieve will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result will be responsible for him being trained.

#### **Q. How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A. In the interest of hygiene, the dog will be toileted in specific outdoor areas away from the classrooms and students. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

#### **Q. My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless they wish to.

**Q. How will allergies of children, staff and visitors be managed?**

A. Anyone with a known allergy to dogs will not touch the dog. We already manage a number of allergies in school and this will be no different for the children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The dog will have designated indoor areas where they work and will not need to enter the classroom or workspace of any pupil or staff member known to have an allergy to dogs

**Q. Can I now bring my dog onto school property?**

A. As you are aware, the school has a 'no dogs' policy. In their designated role of supporting the children, our therapy dog is regarded as a member of staff and are an exception to the 'no dogs' rule. Having a school dog will not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property.

**Q. Where will Watson be based?**

A. Watson will be based in Mrs Grieve's office. He will overtime participate in structured group activities in designated intervention rooms and outside areas and will always be accompanied by a responsible adult. At all times in the school building and most of the time outside, he will be kept on a lead. There may be some occasions on the field with Mrs Grieve or a responsible adult where Watson is off the lead to participate in a specific activity with a specific group of children.

**Q. Will Cooper go into the classrooms?**

A. Watson will not enter any classroom where a child has opted out of contact or has a known allergy.