



Mentor Dog Policy 2024

Committee	Date Agreed	Date to be reviewed
		2 years, or when new guidance is received

Mentor Dog Policy

Introduction

Children can 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, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

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

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. This is a risk that needs to be managed. 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 Executive Head Teacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the mentor dog to be present. When the dog is present in school, posters will be placed around to make staff, pupils, parents and carers aware.

School Policy

The dog will be owned by a member of staff.

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the mentor dog.
- Only the mentor dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy, assistance dog or dog mentor dog and the Executive Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.
- The dog has been chosen because of its intelligence, its ability to respond well to training and its suitability to work with children. It has also been chosen as it sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a mentor dog will be in school. The Executive Head Teacher has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the mentor dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school both verbally and through the use of posters.
- If the mentor dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school.
- The mentor 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. Currently these are Miss Rowe and Miss Coston.
- Children must never be left alone with the mentor dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the mentor dog. Children should remain calm around the mentor dog.
- Children should never go near or disturb the mentor dog when he is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the mentor dog.
- Children will not go in the mentor dog house within the classroom.
- If the mentor 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 mentor 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 mentor dog is frightened or nervous. If the mentor dog is displaying any of these warning signs, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat in close proximity to the mentor dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke the mentor dog on his/her body, chest, back and not by his/her face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands before and after handling the mentor dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their child access to the mentor dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the mentor dog and related protocols on arrival. Office staff will relay visitor issues to the Executive Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher as soon as possible.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the mentor dog.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the mentor dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The mentor dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.
- The mentor dog flea, wormer and vaccines will always be up to date. This will be recorded and kept by the dog owner.
- Children and staff will have regular training and update about management around the dog and will be provided with information contained in Appendix 2.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Executive Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Executive Head Teacher.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Executive Head Teacher 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.

Appendix 1.

Reasons to have a dog in school

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 as a result of having a dog at school.

Attendance:

Case study: Alice was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Alice was encouraged back into school using caring for Jock, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Alice that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Alice came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

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 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 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, 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 school, 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 children's social skills and self-esteem.

Support dogs can work with students on a one-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.

Appendix 2.

APPROACHING

The Dog Mentor



- STAY 2 METRES AWAY FROM THE DOG
- THERE SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN TWO PEOPLE AROUND THE DOG AT A TIME
- ALWAYS ASK BEFORE STROKING THE DOG
- IF GIVEN PERMISSION TO STROKE THE DOG, YOU MUST LOWER YOURSELF TO THE GROUND
- APPROACH THE DOG WITH THE DOG MENTOR BREATHING
- KEEP YOUR HAND LOW WITH YOUR PALM FACING UP
- STROKE THE DOG FROM THE CHEST OR SHOULDER DOWN TO THE TAIL
- NEVER REACH OVER THE TOP OF THE DOG'S HEAD
- YOU SHOULD NOT RUFFLE THE DOG'S FUR





The Dog Mentor



FOOD RULE'S

- ALWAYS GIVE A TREAT TO THE DOG ON THE FLAT OF YOUR HAND
- PUT ALL RUBBISH IN THE BIN
- NO FOOD TO BE LEFT ON THE FLOOR, EVEN IN THE DINING HALL
- FOOD SHOULD GO IN FOOD WASTE BINS





GENERAL RULES

The Dog Mentor



- PLEASE DO NOT SHOUT THE DOG'S NAME FROM ANY DISTANCE
- WHEN APPROACHING THE DOG, TRY NOT TO SHOUT OR BE OVER EXCITED
- NO RUNNING TOWARDS TO THE DOG
- NEVER STROKE THE DOG WHEN STANDING BEHIND THE DOG
- YOU MUST NOT EAT WHILST STROKING THE DOG
- NO MORE THAN TWO HANDS ON THE DOG AT ONE TIME
- ALL CLASSROOMS MUST BE DOG MENTOR READY
- ASK AN ADULT TO HELP WHEN REMOVING ANYTHING FROM DOGS MOUTH

