



School Dog Policy (and FAQ)

Date:	20.09.23
Ratified by:	Anna Tyler -
Signed:	
Position on the Board:	Chair of LAGB
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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?

Yes there is, though 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. 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 Principal. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present. When completing risk assessments, we consider if the benefit outweighs the risk and due to the integration plan, socialisation and training measures put in place, we consider the school dog to be very low risk. We also believe the benefits by far outweigh the risk.

About The School Dog:

The dog will be owned by Mrs Roberts.

His name is Ron and his birthday is 24th September 2021.



- The dog is a Cockapoo, chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, has hair that does not mat and is very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents and children will be informed by letter that a dog will be in school and then surveyed by an electronic form to capture information/concerns at an individual level.
- The school 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 dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is unwell he will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between rooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of a supervising adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog when 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.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog fouls should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their pupil's access to the dog.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of supervising adults.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. Other dogs must not come on site unless the Principal has been informed beforehand.

Roles and Responsibilities:

CRST has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School and the LAGB (Governing Body) ensure that this policy is adopted in accordance with their own school's needs. 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.

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, 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, 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 may 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

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Roberts; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a breeding home where the mother and siblings were seen and has been specifically chosen for its breed and temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog will be kept in the Thrive Room with Mrs Roberts or another designated place when he is not timetabled to be working with any pupils. The space will be separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dog will also have a space to spend time in other areas where children can interact safely. The dog may also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

Mrs Roberts will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Ron has been trained by Mrs Roberts in her family home. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog through a local reputable company.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted in a low-use area of the school grounds – on the edge of our school field away from the frequently used areas. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Ron will be in school for only 3.5 hours initially. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to

be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will be kept in Mrs Roberts room (or other designated space) and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for 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 is given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

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

Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.

Other notes and key points

- This academic year will be integrations and socialisation – getting used to the school environment
- The dog will be mature enough to act as full therapy dog and listen to children read etc... from 12 months of age. From January 2024 he will have a timetable which will involve sessions in Thrive, reading/ library or social emotional support. Rest periods and exercise will also be timetabled.