



School Dog Policy

Beech Hill Primary



2023-2025

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1. Introduction

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with pets. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with dogs and puppies. As dogs are one of the most popular pets, it is more than likely that children will have some exposure to a dog while still at school and at the request of pupils Beech Hill Primary have researched and found a Kennel Club Assured dog to join the school community.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment? Of course 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 dogs. Therefore, it is just another risk that can be successfully managed. We should not lose sight of the fact that 'nearly all biting accidents are preventable and very often depend on the behaviour of the child prior to the accident.'¹

The objective of this document is to ensure that the school has a written policy and adopt practices which minimise the risk of accidents or injuries between children and dogs.

All children will have training by Head Teacher on behaviour and how to stay safe around a puppy and dogs in general.

2. Guidance

2.1 Bringing dogs into the classroom

It is important that suitable arrangements are in place for the care of the dog and children in school. These arrangements must follow this school policy on Dogs in School, which is based on the following guidance:

- Parents will be informed if there is a new dog in school.
- A risk assessment is in place around dogs being in school
- Consideration was given to the temperament and characteristics of the breed of dog purchased, including the size of the dog and its age. The Executive Headteacher consulted www.thekennelclubbreedstandards and opted for an English Springer Spaniel.
- Children with known allergic reactions to dogs will not have close interactions with them.
- All First Aiders have been fully trained should a child have an unexpected allergic reaction.

¹ Ibid.

- We also considered the environment that the animal has been brought up in. The dog will be brought up in a family home environment and will be well used to the behaviour and sounds of children.
- Parents are all aware we have a school dog with regular updates on his activities on the school website and newsletters.
- Prospective parents are notified we have a school dog. Parents are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance.
- Children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must have their access restricted and anti-allergy wipes are available.
- Ted **will not** be required to be on a lead when in class with but will be under full control following Kennel Club Good Citizen training.
- Ted **will not** be required to be on lead when moving around school at other times when accompanied by member of staff but will be under full control and supervision following Kennel Club Good Citizen training.
- The children will never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Prior to the dog being in a classroom, pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs. Children are likely to become excited and it is important that they react calmly and carefully 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 be told not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should be told never to go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- The number of children patting/stroking or meeting the dog will be monitored at all times. A large number of children could cause the dog to become nervous and agitated. On-going monitoring of the situation is vital. Since dogs cannot speak, the only way they can be understood is through their body language. Growling or baring 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. Dogs displaying any of these warning signs should be immediately removed from the environment. Pupils will be made aware of these warning signs.
- Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog using soap and water.
- If the dog is ill he must not be brought into school.
- The dog will be walked off site at lunchtimes for toileting.

Additional guidance for puppies and young dogs

Puppies will be introduced to children in class. Puppy will remain in crate until all children have been trained and JR, TW are confident this has been achieved.

- The puppy, Daisy will be required to be on a lead when in class until full Good Citizen Award Training has been completed. Daisy must be kept on a lead at all times when moving around school **during busy times** – start and end of day, break and assembly times.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately. Designated staff will use gloves and spray to clear all dog waste when walking the dog around the outside of the school grounds.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

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

The Head teacher is responsible for developing this guidance into a school practice and implementing it.

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. This has been sought by the headteacher from Newcastle City Council May 2015, prior to investigating a dog.

They recommended;

- Using an assured breeder,
- Having the puppy health checked by a vet and a record of injections kept.
- Ensuring the puppy and pupils are trained to handle the school environment,
- Ensuring the dog is fully inoculated,
- Ensuring the dog has a quiet space for sleep and peace (Head teacher's office),

- Give children and parents the opportunity to not have their child around the dog.
- Give thought to children who are scared of dogs.
- Only allowing handling when the dog is calm and the head teacher has confidence in the dog.

4. Reasons for having a dog in school

Social Development: Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility and boundaries.

With a dog in the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the dog, this includes walking and grooming. Research reports that involving pupils 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 taking care of a dog at school.

Flourishing -Support dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who are going through upsetting or difficult times or even those who are 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 pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Reading Programmes can make a huge difference to some pupils. 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 to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer because 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, children find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs have proved to be calm and happy to have children read to them or join a group of children as they read. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgemental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers. The dog will also provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them as they read but are amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. Research has proved that pupils 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 children they mix with.

As a reward: Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the children. The children who have performed incredibly well during the week or those that have made progress in a certain subject, or those that have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded by spending time during break to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self- esteem.

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 school 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 school dog.

5. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

The Kennel Club – A club established for the registration of pedigree dogs in the UK.

6. Associated Documents

Dogs Trust Staying Safe with Dogs

The Kennel Club Safe and Sound Teachers' Notes

www.thekennelclub.org.uk