

Policy Name: Dogs in Schools	
Last updated:	November 2021
Date of next review:	November 2022
Member of staff responsible for the policy:	Matt Pauling
Dissemination of the policy:	All students and staff, website

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?

Of course there is, although 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.

School Policy

The dog is owned by Rachel Flower. The dog is a Fox Red Labrador, who has been PAT (Pets As Therapy) assessed and chosen for his calm temperament.

The Senior Leadership Team have agreed that the school can have a dog. Staff have also been informed (and been given the opportunity to raise their concerns). Parents have been informed by the Parent's Bulletin that a dog will be in school.

CHS has produced a **risk assessment** which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Staff, visitors and pupils known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. When the dog is in the CHS building/classroom, a poster will be visible to visitors making them aware that a therapy dog is on the premises.

If the dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school. It is also the responsibility of the PAT volunteer to ensure that the dog is regularly vaccinated, wormed and treated for flea prevention. The PAT volunteer will also inspect the dog's coat and check his nails are clipped.

The dog will be kept on a lead when moving around CHS and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.

Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with pupils.

Pupils should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.

Pupils should remain calm 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.

Pupils should not to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Pupils should never go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating. Pupils must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

If the dog is surrounded by a large number of pupils, 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 showing 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. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.

The dog will be walked and toileted prior to coming into CHS

Roles and Responsibilities

The Senior Leadership Team has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Head Teacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.

Context, research and case studies.

Reasons to have a dog in school:

CHS SCHOOL SETTING

Support Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who are feeling anxious or going through upsetting/difficult times. The dog can help pupils feel calm and bring joy and comfort to a context that might otherwise be stressful for a young person. Pupils who struggle with social interaction and anxiety can also find a reassuring friend in a dog.

WIDER SCHOOL SETTINGS

Bullying can be a problem in schools with pupils anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, dogs are making a difference. Researchers report that pupils 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 pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%.

ATTENDANCE CASE STUDY

Mandy was a pupil with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to

care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

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 pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils 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.

READING PROGRAMMES

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," pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupil 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 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 pupils they mix with.

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 older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older pupils use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils. With a dog in the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report 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 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 pupils. Pupils will be rewarded, as appropriate, with spending time during lunch or break to interact with the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Having a dog in school can have a significant impact on the amount of litter around the building and outside.

For more information see:

<https://petsastherapy.org>