



Document Control	
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## School Dog Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

Research studies have shown the numerous benefits of dogs working in schools. Spending time with an animal decreases anxiety and worry, promotes a good mood and supports positive mental health.

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. Staff and visitors may find the presence of a dog has a calming and stress relieving effect and this will positively impact on their own mental health and wellbeing.

Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Emotional – spending time with an animal, a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move and improve fitness and stimulates the senses.
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others.
- Learning – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing.
- Reading – reading to dogs has been proven to help children 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. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud.
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.

This document is reviewed annually by the Headmistress or as events or legislation change requires. The next scheduled date for review is January 2024. An annual risk assessment is also carried out and will be reviewed alongside this policy.

## **2. Key Personnel**

Sarah Raja, the Headmistress, is responsible for all aspects of the school dog. The dog will live with her and she will continue to be the legal owner. All costs associated with the school dog will be covered by Sarah Raja.

## **3. Procedures**

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headmistress. This includes drop off and collection times. No other dogs must come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog, and the Headmistress has been informed beforehand.

This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

- Regular assemblies and lessons will be held with all age groups to ensure they are aware of the rules and expectations of having a school dog. All parents have been informed about the school dog.
- Staff and parents, on behalf of their children, have been asked about any known allergies and appropriate measures have been put into place to minimise contact and to manage allergies.
- Signage will be used to inform pupils, staff and visitors that a dog is onsite.
- The breed of dog chosen is an intelligent breed that responds well to training and is known to be good with children, is very loyal and gentle in nature.
- The dog will be under the supervision and full control of a member of staff at all times.
- When moving around the school and interacting with pupils, he will always be on a lead or being held by an adult.
- When relaxing in a contained office, he may be off the lead, but he will never be free to walk around the school building on his own.
- Children will never be left alone with the dog.
- Access to the dog will be carefully managed to ensure any children who are frightened of dogs are supported.

With proper guidance and handling, children can learn to overcome their fear of animals and grow in respect and appreciation for them. Some children may never learn to love animals, but to learn to accept them within their environment is important in this age, where people come across dogs everywhere within our community.

Staff working with the dog shall ensure that children are reminded of the rules and expectations around the dog. These include but are not limited to:

- We must always be calm around Otto.
- We should not make sudden movements or run away from him. Standing still with our arms folded will help calm Otto down.
- We will not put our faces close to him.
- When Otto is eating or sleeping, we will not disturb him.
- We will not play too roughly with Otto.
- When we have been stroking and touching Otto, we will remember to wash our hands carefully.
- We will not go near Otto when we are eating our snack or lunch.

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around the school dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained, and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the supervising adult using dog poo bags. The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of staff.

The dog will have all the required certifications stating that all required inoculations, worming etc have been undertaken. If the dog is ill, he will not be allowed into school. The school's insurance policy will cover the dog and any possible subsequent claim that may be made.

## **Appendix**

### **School Dog- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

#### Does the addition of Otto mean that other dogs may now be brought onto the school site?

No, our policy is still that dogs may not be brought onto the school site. In order for Otto to spend time in school there are a number of checks and paperwork that have to be completed, including a full risk assessment, appropriate insurance and a dog welfare plan. However, our Health and Safety policy and insurance details do not extend to cover other dogs on site.

#### What if my daughter has an allergy to dogs?

I have reviewed the list of girls who have dog allergies and have contacted parents as appropriate. However, if your daughter has an allergy that we are not aware of, please do let us know so that we can make the necessary arrangements for her.

#### What will Otto do when he is in school?

Otto will spend the majority of his time in school with me, either in my office or around the school building. He may also have a bed in other offices but will always be with an adult.

#### Will Otto be off the lead?

When moving around the school and interacting with pupils Otto will always be on a lead or being held by an adult. When relaxing in a contained office, he may be off the lead, but he will never be free to walk around the school building on his own.

#### Will Otto come out to break?

Otto may well pop out at break or lunchtime, or even help with drop off and collection time. He will always be on his lead and with a member of staff.

#### Are we allowed to stroke him?

Yes, absolutely! It is important that he is not overcrowded, but Otto loves attention and enjoys spending time with children. You are welcome to stroke him either on the top of his head or on his back.

#### Do we have to stroke him?

No. No-one will be forced to stroke Otto or spend time with him if they would rather not.

#### Can we pick him up?

Like any animal, Otto needs to be handled carefully and will only be picked up by adults.

#### Where is Otto when he's not at school?

Otto is my family's pet, along with two cats! As such, all responsibility for him both in and out of school falls to me.