



ALBOURNE C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Dog in School Policy

*So God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water,
and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw. Genesis 1:21*

Approved by:	Full Governing Body	Date:
		10.03.24
Next review due by:	10.03.26	

Fiona Keeling

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1. Rationale and Aims

At Albourne Primary School, we pride ourselves on the school's nurturing ethos and our ability to create a happy and safe learning environment. The education that we provide is not just about learning to read and write, it is about developing the whole child.

Children and adults can benefit immensely, both 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 and staff can take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Our aims are detailed in the job description, found in Appendix 1. By having a dog in school we would like to achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Boost literacy skills
- Provide support for calming behaviours and positive attachments
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- Improve attendance for identified pupils
- Motivate children
- Support wellbeing for staff

2. Benefits of Having a Dog in School

2.1 Cognitive

Companionship with a dog can stimulate memory, problem solving and game playing. Dogs can provide a purposeful context and motivator for learning.

2.2 Behavioural

Negative behaviour can impact on learning. Dogs can help pupils to identify with others, provide a non-judgemental listening ear and develop empathy skills. A dog can provide a meaningful support for positive reinforcement of good behaviour.

2.3 Social

A dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. After experiencing unconditional love and trust from a dog we would expect to see enhanced relationships with peers and staff. Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching children's social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, teach kindness, responsibility, and boundaries. With a dog in school, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes supervised walking and grooming. Involving children in the daily care of school dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. Children also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

2.4 Emotional

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. Children can learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

Children encouraged to gently pat or talk to the dog to teach sensitive touch and to help them to be calm and promotes provides tactile stimulation.

2.5 Environmental

A dog increases the sense of a family environment, being part of something, another purpose for coming to school. Some of these benefits listed above will continue for the young person long after the school day is over.

It will hopefully also boost the children's connection to the school environment.

2.6 Academic

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop their literacy skills and build confidence in reading. 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. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud. This activity can create a calming effect on the pupil, as the dog will listen to the pupil read with no judgement or criticism and they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. This in turn creates an environment where a student's enthusiasm for reading can grow and also develop the confidence to read aloud.

2.7 Positive Behaviour & Attendance

Dogs are gentle and loving but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for children. In time and once the dog is settled, the dog will be able to spend supervised time with children as a reward for positive behaviour. Walking, grooming, reading with, playing with and training are some of the responsibilities children will be allowed to undertake, under supervision from the handler. It is hoped that a dog will provide an incentive for positive behaviour and provide a powerful motivation for attending school.

2.8 Overcoming Phobias

There are individuals who have dog phobias, a school dog and a careful de-sensitisation programme could help to reduce some of these fears.

3. Policy

The dog that attends Albourne Primary school is Star (the Headteacher's dog). She will visit occasionally.

- Staff, parents, children and governors will be consulted and informed about the plans to have a dog in school. A risk assessment has been produced and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs will not be allowed access to the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school and information, including this policy will be available on the school website.
- If the dog is unwell, she will not be allowed in to school.

- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving around the school site or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of one of her named adults.
- Children must never be left alone with a school dog and there must be adequate supervision at all times.
- Children will be introduced to the dog slowly and will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog:
 - Children should remain calm at all times
 - They should not make sudden movements
 - They must not stare into a dog's eyes as this can be threatening to dogs
 - Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up
 - Assemblies will be carefully planned and delivered to introduce the dog to the school community
 - Children should never go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating
 - Children will not be allowed to play roughly with the dog
 - Everyone must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him
 - Hands must be washed after coming in to contact with the dog
- Children and adults should wash their hands before and after stroking the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. The adult in charge of the dog should carefully monitor the dog. The dog will slowly be introduced to children and a safe space for the dog will be provided at all times.
- Any outdoor access will be supervised and the dog will remain on a lead at all times.
- Dogs express their feelings through body language. Growling or bearing teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is threatened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs it should be immediately removed from the situation or environment.
- The dog will not be allowed in to the lunch hall or at any times when children are eating or preparing food.
- Everybody should be careful to stroke the dog on his body, chest, back and not his face or top of head. Children will be reminded of this expectation before interacting with the dog. This will be modelled by handlers.
- A designated area of grass will be used for toileting. Dog foul should be cleaned up immediately and placed into a sealed plastic bag before going into the bin. The handler will wash their hands with soap and water immediately after visiting the toilet.
- Where children or staff have concerns, allergies or phobias about a dog, access will be limited. A list will be maintained to ensure that contact is carefully managed.
- The dog will be included in fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the named adult he is with at the time of the evacuation. Staff will be aware when there is a dog onsite.
- Whilst the dog has a role in school, their legal owners will incur all costs relating to the dog including care, grooming, food, healthcare and public liability insurance.

- The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our school dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside the school.
- If somebody reports concerns with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. It will be approved and monitored by the governing body.

3.1 Star









The dog's legal owner is Ms Keeling and when not at school lives with her. During the school day, the dog will be based in the Headteacher's office. A member of staff will be responsible for the dog at all times. Children will not be allowed access to the dog unless it is supervised by the member of staff looking after the dog.

Star is a miniature dachshund who has grown up in a family home, been in school since she was a puppy and known to have an excellent temperment with children.

Appendix 1

Job Description for a School Dog

We would like a school dog to be able to:

-  Support wellbeing for children by providing companionship, a listening ear and quality nurture time
-  Support positive attendance by providing motivation for identified children to attend school
-  Give children the opportunity to learn essential skills of responsibility and caring for others
-  Promote high standards of reading by providing essential skills of responsibility and caring for others
-  Support high standards of behaviour in school
-  Provide a purposeful context for children's learning, e.g: caring for animals and others; writing a purpose; topic based projects
-  Work with identified vulnerable children to provide companionship and nurture
-  Provide support for staff wellbeing

Appendix 2

Rules to be established by all stakeholders:

All children at school are taught how to approach dogs and how to respond to unwanted behaviour. They are taught that they must ask if they wish to pet the dog and know how he is trained to greet people. This is an important life-lesson for the children.

- 1 Ignore the dog - speak to handler first

- 2 Ask permission to approach
- 3 Four paws on the floor (everyone needs to be consistent with this).
- 4 Take turns (the children – not the dog...)
- 5 No barking (The dog – not the children...)
- 6 Let sleeping dogs lie (we recognise that a school can be a tiring experience for a dog, especially with their heightened sense of smell!)