



Dog in School Policy

Mildene Primary School

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?

Any risks of having a dog in school will be covered by the school's dog risk assessment.

School Policy

- The dog will be owned by Mrs Laban.
- The Governors, have agreed that the school can have a dog.
- Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog.
- Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school.
- Mrs Laban and Mrs Locke have produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- The dog is trained to a high standard for obedience.
- The dog is fully inoculated and regularly treated for fleas and worms.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs (animals) must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any animal allergies on admission.
- If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- There may be occasions where the dog is working off lead but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult. Before removing the dog from the lead all those present will be consulted.
- The children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with children.

- Two school adults will always be in the classroom when the dog is present.
- Children will be educated about dog safety, how to approach a dog, how to care for a dog and behave around a dog before the dog comes into the classroom.
- The children will be educated about dog body language. Dogs express their feelings 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. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children 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. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog if she is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- The dog will have a designated quiet space when they are in the classroom.
- Children should not feed or eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- The dog will have a designated toilet area.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy.

Teachers, staff and children are required to abide by this policy.

Reasons to have a dog in school

Bullying

This can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. 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%.

Attendance

Can encourage children to attend school regularly.

Behaviour

Low level 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.

Reading

Reading programmes involving 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. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have students 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 the classroom, 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, will be rewarded with spending time during lunch, break or green time to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will 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.

The wider community

Dogs can be a great way to help students to interact with members of the wider community. For example, students may take the dog to visit other schools, sporting events, hospitals or care homes and help others to benefit from this therapeutic support.

It is important to note that the dog can also have a significant positive impact on the staff and parents in our community with many taking pleasure in seeing and spending time with the dog.

Agreed by Governors

November 2020

Reviewed

July 2022