



## Our Blessed Saints Federation School Dog Policy



### Introduction

Research has shown that children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog.

SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School would like to introduce the use of a school dog as part of the mental health and wellbeing provision at the school.

### ***Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?***

Yes, 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 a risk that needs to be managed and a thorough risk assessment has been carried out in conjunction with The Dog Mentor. (appendix 3)

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times.

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

### School Policy

This policy relates solely to the school dog 'Ziggy' owned by the member of staff, Louise Russell.

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy, assistance dog or Dog Mentor Dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.
- The dog is a Labrador, and this breed has been chosen because of its known intelligence, positive response to training and reputation for being sociable, friendly and calm with children.
- Staff, parents, and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. The Headteacher alongside The Dog Mentor has produced a risk assessment, and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors, and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is unwell, he 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 a trained adult.

- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be always appropriate adult supervision.
- Children will be taught about the expectation of calm, positive behaviour around the dog and this will be discussed frequently as part of our daily routines.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog if it is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by many children, the dog may become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation and reduces the number of children immediately.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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 he should be immediately removed from the situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted and complete a parent agreement form to confirm that their child can have access to the school dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival. The office staff will relay any visitor concerns to the Head Teacher asap.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are always supervising.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.

## **Actions**

If someone reports having a concern about the school dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or a Deputy/Teacher in Charge as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Headteacher.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body 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, staff, pupils, parents, and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

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

We will encourage sessions from The Dog Mentor and The Dog's Trust to support the work and training that we are implementing in school.

## Appendix 1.

### Reasons to have a dog in school

Academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

- 1) Improve academic achievement
- 2) Increase literacy skills
- 3) Calming behaviours
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 8) Motivate children who are often less attentive

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

#### Behaviour:

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of pupils. 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%. 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.

#### Attendance:

##### **Case study example:**

Alice was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Alice was encouraged back into school using caring for Jock, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Alice that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Alice came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

#### Education:

Reading programs with dogs are doing wonders for 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 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," children find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have student read to them or join a group of children in the Hub 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 and above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love.

Research has proved that children 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 their peers.

### **Social Development:**

Dogs in school offers an opportunity for improving social development. Dogs are especially useful for teaching children 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 children can be observed to use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower their peers.

Introducing a dog into school, offers children the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other to 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 children. Those pupils who have performed incredibly well during the week, those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending time with our school Dog - Ziggy. 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.

Support Dogs can work with children on a one-one basis and will especially help those children who may have previously encountered upsetting/difficult times or 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 children they are spending time with. Children who

## Appendix 2

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

#### **Q: Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for the costs?**

A: The legal owner will be Miss Russell who will care for the dog out of school hours and will bear the costs of the day-to-day provision for the dog. As the dog will be a school dog, the school will fund the specific school-associated training. We are working with 'The School Dog Mentor' to organise and implement training.

#### **Q: Is the dog from a reputable breeder?**

A: Yes. We have researched breeders and have chosen a reputable breeder who is registered as part of the Kennel Club.

#### **Q Will the dog be a distraction?**

A: The dog will be kept in the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure that the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

The dog will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the corridor and in the outdoor areas where children can interact safely.

The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, staff will be consulted prior to meeting taking place.

#### **Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?**

A: Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many other sources, including other local schools that successfully have a school dog. There will be a school dog policy available from October 2022 which can be viewed on the school website and will be reviewed annually. As part of our school training from 'The Dog Mentor', risk assessments will be completed for both school sites - St. Luke's Catholic Primary School and SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School.

#### **Q Who is responsible for training?**

A: Miss Russell will be the legal owner of the dog and will be responsible for initial puppy training - this will be completed through the trainer 'Shamen's K9 Services' who is an accredited trainer for the Institute of modern dog trainers.

Appropriate professional school dog training will be obtained from 'The Dog Mentor' a link can be accessed below which gives further information. <https://www.thedogmentor.co.uk/>

**Q: How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?**

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog, where possible, will be toileted off school site. This means that there will be reduced chance of the children coming into contact with feces. Our policy of no dogs on the playground is still applicable to all parents as we are unable to put effective control measures into place for unknown dogs.

**Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?**

A: The school dog is a Labrador, which are a high shedding breed. Parents will be asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to the introduction of the dog to the wider school community. A list of children who should not interact with the dog will be kept by the head teacher/teachers and office staff. Staff members will also be asked to inform the head teacher of any allergies.

Fully supervised, children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog ; pupils with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction.

Children will be taught to wash hands after active participation with the dog.

Flea treatments will be carried out at monthly intervals. Worming treatments is carried out with vet guidelines, at 3 monthly intervals.

If the dog is unwell, he will not come into school and will stay at home until he is better.

The dog will never go near food preparation or the school kitchen.

**Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?**

The dog will be walked at break and lunch times by named member of staff and parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and dog during this time.

The dog will be kept in the head teacher's office and will only have planned and supervised contact with the children following an intensive period of training. There will be unlimited access to water, and we will be working closely with other professionals to ensure that the dog's welfare is always carefully considered.

**Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?**

A Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.



**Appendix 3 - The Dog Mentor Risk Assessment - SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School.**  
**Completed on 4.10.2022 by Jenny Duckworth**

Risk ID	Description	Impact	Owner	Impact	Probability	Risk Rating (Value)	Mitigation Plan	Adj Impact	Adj Probability	Adj Risk Rating	Contingency Plan	Status
Risk No	Risk written in terms of the issue that could occur	Impact on the school, pupil, handler or dog		select Low, Medium or high	select unlikely, likely, highly likely or certain	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What can be done to prevent the risk being realised	Impact on Risk following mitigation activities	Probability of issue occurring following mitigation activities	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What could be done to minimise the impact if the risk is realised	Commentary of dates, actions and progress to minimise and retire this risk
1	Minor injury to pupil by dog (such as scratches)	Could require medical treatment (in school). Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely		Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupil on behaviour around dog. Limiting tricks performed for smaller pupils (high five, etc). Dog's claws trimmed. Dog on lead at all times	Low	Unlikely		Minor first aid	Mitigation actions are in place
2	Serious injury to pupil by dog (such as biting or mauling)	Would require medical treatment (in school or at hospital) after assessment. Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog Handler	High	Unlikely		Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupil on behaviour around dog. Monitoring Dog's health and temperament at all times. Dog on lead at all times.	High	Unlikely		First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are in place
3	Other injuries	Trips, slips or falls not directly related to dog.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely		Children supervised at all times. Dog trained to not pull while on walking on lead.	Low	Unlikely		First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are in place
4	Allergic Reaction	Allergic reaction to dog	Dog Handler / Head of School	High	Likely		All pupils to have completed consent form indicating any issues. Pupils with severe allergies to not work directly with dog All pupils to follow hygiene controls to minimise risk of affecting other pupils Seek medical advice on pupils who may experience serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) as pupil's status becomes clear to school to enable additional controls to be put in place	High	Unlikely		If dog comes into contact with pupil who has allergy, remove pupil from environment and seek medical advice if symptoms arise	Mitigation actions are in place
5	Illness transferred from dog to pupil	Pupil could become unwell after infection requiring treatment and/or time off school. Examples are worms, rabies, fleas, etc	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Dog to be inoculated against all recommended diseases as per recommended schedule. Worm and flea treatment to be carried out by handler regularly.	Medium	Won't Happen		Dog has up to date medical history from vets. Flea and worm treatment carried out monthly.	Mitigation actions are in place
6	Dog excrement	Hygiene issues within school. In extreme cases, faeces can cause a disease which can cause blindness.	Dog Handler	High	Likely		Dog to be removed from indoor environment. Taken to appropriate location. Faeces removed from school grounds.	High	Won't Happen		Appropriate action to completely clean area, all waste disposed of in correct manner	Mitigation actions are in place
7	General Hygiene	Germs could be spread between dogs and humans.	Dog Handler / Head of School	Low	Highly likely		All staff and pupils to wash hands after coming into contact with dog. Keep dog away from all food preparation areas and away from pupils during times when they are eating.	Low	Unlikely		No contingency plan	Handler to request that handwashing is put in place or introduction of some other method such as alcohol gel or wipes.
8	Impacts on Dog from other animals	If other animals such as dogs, cats or foxes are around in the school grounds, the dog could be attacked or chased which could adversely impact both the dog and/or pupils and staff.	Dog Handler	Medium	Unlikely		Dog to be kept under control at all times. Handler to be aware of environment at all times	Low	Unlikely		Dog training and control is required to reduce impact and likelihood of occurrence	Mitigation actions are in place
9	Minor injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates near to school). The forest school is next to a deer park and lake.	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside. Dog to be on lead outside in order to prevent it entering the lake and eating duck and goose feces from the neighbouring deer park.	Low	Unlikely		Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid may be required	Mitigation actions are in place
10	Major injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates near to school). The forest school is next to a deer park and lake.	Dog Handler / Head of School	High	Unlikely		Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside. Dog to be on lead outside in order to prevent it entering the lake and eating duck and goose feces from the neighbouring deer park.	High	Unlikely		Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid to be administered and then taken to vet.	Mitigation actions are in place

11	General welfare of dog	If overworked, dog could become tired and may display unwanted behaviour or become ill.	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely		Handler to be aware of dog's characteristics. Provide dog with regular breaks and access to water. Limit the number of pupils working with dog at one time to reduce chance of dog being overwhelmed.	Medium	Unlikely		Extended rest period for dog	Mitigation actions are all in place
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