



Bridgewater Primary School

School Dog Policy

Subject Leader: Maureen Bell

Date formulated: March 2017

Approved by GB: May 2018

Review Date: May 2019

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.

School Policy

- The dog will be owned by Bridgewater Primary School and cared for in and out of school hours by Miss Bell.
- The dog is a German Spitz. she has come from a reputable family environment and is good with children and busy everyday life.
- Mrs Robson, Headteacher, and the Governors have all agreed that the school can have a dog
- Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have the dog.
- Parents have been informed letter and information on our website that we have a dog in school
- Miss Bell has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dogs
- An ioniser has been placed beside the dogs' pen to minimise the presence of any potential allergens
- 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 supervision of an adult
- Students must never be left alone with the dogs and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when the dog is present with students
- Students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around a dog. Students 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. Students should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up
- Students should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating
- Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If a dog is surrounded by a large number of students, it 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 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 not feed the dog or eat close to the dog
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately, by an adult.

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. The Head teacher may delegate this responsibility to a Deputy Head.

Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy.

The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Appendix 1

Reasons to have a dog in school

Bullying can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. 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 Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog, as an incentive.

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 programmes with 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. "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," students 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 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 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 or break 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.