

## School Dog risk assessment and Introduction



# NOVA

### **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. Appendix B sets out further reasons for why the school feels it will be beneficial to have a school dog.

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

Of course there is, though 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 just another risk that needs to be managed.

### **School Policy**

The dog will be owned by Mrs Bird. Nova is a Spaniel/poodle mix chosen for its very mild temperament and non-mounting coat.

The Executive Head, and the Head Teacher have both agreed that the school can have a dog.

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Staff have been informed, through staff briefing, that the school will have a dog. Parents have been informed by Head of school newsletter that a dog will be in school on Wednesdays and Fridays from 25<sup>th</sup> January. Lessons around the school dog and parents will be given an opportunity to speak to the head with regards to the school dog. Mrs Bird has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually. The risk assessment is attached as Appendix A

In the event of an emergency evacuation the adult supporting Mrs Bird will accompany her to the Fire Evacuation point.

Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any allergies on admission.

If the dog is unwell Nova will not be allowed into school.

Students must never be left alone with the dog 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 the 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 to put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up. Students should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating. Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.

If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students, the dog 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 he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not feed or eat close to the dogs.

Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog. As a school we will provide anti-bacterial gel.

Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

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## **Appendix A Risk Assessment**

### **Introduction:**

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding. The team at Sebright school have been considering obtaining a dog as a school therapy pet for some time and the decision was made in January 2023 to go ahead with the project.

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

- For the school to have a pet that was able to live as naturally as conditions would allow.
- For the animal to be properly cared for outside of the school day.
- To have a pet that the children could interact with and also be of benefit to the children's social and emotional development.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any parent who does not want their child to interact with Bailey is invited to write to admin and inform her of their wishes. There are no diseases associated with the puppy as her vet will be responsible for vaccinations, including rabies and completing regular health checks and necessary treatment.

The risk assessment below is a working document and will be checked annually by key staff

## **Appendix B Reasons to have a dog in school**

### **Behaviour**

Behaviour problems occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive

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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**

Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive

## **Social Development**

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, 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 living, 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, may 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 to 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.

## **Reading**

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 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.

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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. 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 participation students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%

## Appendix 3: risk assessment

The following risk assessment will be reviewed at least annually and will be updated and reviewed if any incidents occur involving the school dog.

<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<b>Risk Management</b>
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<b>Hazard</b> <i>List significant hazards which may result in serious harm or affect several people.</i>	<b>Associated Risk</b> <i>(include details of persons at risk e.g. pupils, staff, member of public etc.)</i>	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk (L x C)	<b>Control Measures/Existing controls</b> <i>List existing controls and measures taken to ensure the safety of pupils and staff or note where the information may be found. (e.g. Information, instruction, training, systems or procedures)</i>
Dog getting over excited when interacting with children.	Child knocked to the ground.  Child scratched by dog.  Child bitten by dog	3	4	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dog will always be in the care of a responsible adult and will never be allowed to roam freely around the school premises.</li> <li>The dog will be kept on a lead.</li> <li>Children will not be left unsupervised with the dog.</li> <li>Pupils have been and will continue to be taught about the consequences of their actions. Education of this nature is continually given to children, and often to the whole school through assemblies and PHE sessions.</li> <li>Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from chasing them.</li> <li>The dog will also undergo conditioning to the school classroom environment, this training will ensure future therapy or reading sessions to involve the school dog can be done in a calming/therapeutic manner.</li> <li>All staff supporting pupils with the dog will have been introduced to the dog and understand the rules and expectations of having a school dog.</li> <li>Dog will attend the vets regularly to ensure he is in good health and that his claws are kept short.</li> </ul>
Allergies to the dog	Children or staff have allergic reactions	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies before the introduction of the dog to the school. A list of any children/staff who should not interact with the dog will kept on the school system.</li> <li>The children will have the opportunity to interact with the dog as invited by school staff.</li> <li>Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dog.</li> </ul>

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Children getting germs/illness from the dog.	Children or staff will contract diseases that can be carried by dogs.	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All immunisations are kept up to date in accordance with the vets and PAT recommendations and a record will be kept of this.</li> <li>Flea treatment is carried out at 4 week intervals as advised by vets.</li> <li>Worm treatment is carried out every 3 months as advised by vets.</li> <li>The dog will not be allowed in the school dining hall at meal times; and never in the food preparation area.</li> </ul>
Claim is made against school about the dog.	School not adequately covered financially.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owners Insurance will cover any claim.</li> <li>Insurance Certificate will be shared with the school.</li> </ul>

## Consequence

Consequence	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Critical
	No treatment required	Minor physical injury requiring First Aid treatment (e.g. minor cuts, bruises, bumps) and/or minor psychological distress requiring verbal comfort/reassurance	Physical injury requiring medical treatment and/or psychological distress requiring verbal and/or physical comfort/reassurance and de-brief	Serious physical injury (injuries) requiring specialist medical treatment or hospitalization and/or psychological distress that requires longer term support and/or specialist support (e.g. CAMHS)	Multiple serious physical injuries, permanent disability or loss of life and/or long term debilitating psychological distress leading to long term institutional care
Score	1	2	3	4	5

## Likelihood

Taking into account factors such as History, Accidents, Near-misses, Frequency, Duration, Environment, and Current Situation etc.

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Likelihood	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Score	1	2	3	4	5

## Resulting actions

Score 1-4	Low Risk	- Risk at Tolerable level - these risks should be recorded and monitored
Score 5—9	Medium Risk	- Action necessary - These risks should be recorded, monitored and controlled with mitigation actions to reduce the likelihood and seriousness identified and appropriate actions to be identified and endorsed by all staff.
Score 10-15	High Risk	- Action necessary - high priority - these risks should be recorded, monitored and controlled with mitigation actions to reduce the likelihood and seriousness identified and appropriate actions to be identified and endorsed by all staff and Senior Leadership Team. - Activities identified as High Risk may require parental consent but must have been approved by the Senior Leadership Team.
Score 15+	Extreme Risk	- This level of risk could pose a significant impact on an individual/group of individuals or overall school community. <b>No risks assessed as extreme high will ever be taken by the school.</b> The Senior Leadership Team should be advised of identified risks which have been graded at this level.



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