



# POLICY FOR DOGS IN SCHOOLS

**THE FEDERATION OF  
LOWER HALSTOW & NEWINGTON CEP SCHOOLS**

| Approved | Team | Review Date |
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| Feb 19   | SLT  | Spring 2020 |
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## School Dog Policy

### Rationale

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, particularly in times of personal or family crisis.

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

Yes there is, though there are a variety of accidents that can happen within the school environment which exceed the potential for injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3).

### School Policy

Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Executive Headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

The dog is owned by Miss Crowe.

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Executive Headteacher has been informed beforehand.
- The dog is a Cockerpoo (Teddy) chosen because: it sheds little hair, is an intelligent breed that responds well to training, is known to be good with children and is very sociable and friendly.
- The governing body agree that the school dog benefits the children and staff of Lower Halstow and Newington CEP Schools Federation.
- Staff, parents and children are aware that a dog will be in school regularly and have the option to opt out of contact.
- There is a specific risk assessment in place which is reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog, but can be in the same room. The school maintains a list of pupils with known dog allergies.
- All visitors are informed on arrival that there is a dog in school and of related protocols on arrival and office staff relay visitor issues to the Head of School as soon as possible.
- Teddy is used for three main purposes when working with children in school, these are categorised as respite, reward for good work/behaviour and reading confidence work.
- If the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school.
- The dog is kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and is under the full control and supervision of an appropriate adult at all times.
- Children are never left alone with the dog and there is appropriate adult supervision for all direct work.
- For the purpose of this policy an 'appropriate adult' is someone who has experience of dogs, is known to Teddy and has been observed directing him by his trained handler, who makes the final decision regarding their suitability.
- Before each session children are reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs.
  - They should remain calm around the dog
  - They should not make sudden movements or play roughly

- They must never stare into the dog's eyes as this could be threatening
  - They should not put their face near the dog
  - They should always approach the dog standing up
  - They should never go near or disturb the dog when it is sleeping or eating
  - They should not eat close to the dog
  - They should stroke Teddy on his body, chest, back and not his face or top of head
  - They should always wash their hands after handling the dog and avoid touching their own mouth and eyes until after the session
- Everyone waits until Teddy is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking him.
  - If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous and agitated. The dog's handler monitors this and will adjust the session accordingly if needed.
  - 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 displays any of these warning signs he will be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
  - Any dog foul is cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.
  - Parents are informed if their children will have direct access to the dog for personal sessions.
  - Appropriately trained staff maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog. This includes Miss Crowe and Mrs Musk.
  - The office knows the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
  - The dog is included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Miss Crowe or Mrs Musk.

#### Dealing with concerns

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head of School as soon as possible. All concerns are responded to by the Head of School and a record made. If this does not resolve the concern the Executive Headteacher will review the concern.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School. The Head of School is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy. The wider personal development curriculum supports learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This includes highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school. External agencies are used to support this message.

## **Appendix 1. Reasons to have a dog in school**

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

### Education:

Reading programmes with dogs are working 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 when reading. 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 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. With a dog in school, 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 are 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.

#### As respite and support

It has been proven 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.

## **Appendix 2 School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Q Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A The legal owner of the dog is Miss Crowe; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in the SLT office. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure the 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 sports hall and in the playground where children can interact safely.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q Who is responsible for training?

A Miss Crowe is the legal owner of the dog and as a result, is responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training has been obtained. Teddy has passed his Puppy Training, Basic Obedience and Intermediate Obedience.

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

A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the SLT office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog's role will be developed carefully over a period of time, as he gains stamina and he will have unlimited access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Children will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults who are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for minimal moulting, he is given a high-quality food and is groomed on a monthly basis to reduce any possibility of allergens.

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.



## Lower Halstow School Dogs in schools risk assessment

|                               |                            |     |   |   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|---|---|
| Allergies                     | Staff and pupils           | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We seek parental permission for children to interact with dogs</li> <li>Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies</li> </ul>   | Letter to be sent to parents, however as Teddy is a Cockerpooh he barely moults as his fur is mostly of poodle origin.  |
| Poor hygiene and health risks | Staff, pupils and handlers | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All dogs that visit are vaccinated, wormed, and treated for fleas</li> <li>Dogs are groomed before the visit</li> <li>All staff and pupils are required to wash their hands after contact with dogs</li> <li>Handlers clear up dog urine and faeces promptly and dispose of this safely - pupils are told to stay away</li> <li>Dogs are not taken anywhere near food preparation areas</li> </ul> | <p>MC - Teddy is fully vaccinated and is up to date on worming and flea treatment (treatments given on or around the 12<sup>th</sup> of each month)</p> <p>Teddy is groomed on a monthly basis.</p> |
| Children misbehaving          | Pupils, dogs and handlers  | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are told in advance what to expect and how to behave</li> <li>School staff are present at all time during the visit</li> <li>School staff are ready to remove children who misbehave or upset dogs</li> </ul>   |   |

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| Activities and games involving the dog                           | Staff, pupils, dogs and handlers | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handler(s) remain with dogs at all times</li> <li>• Handler(s) speak to school staff in advance and ensure the area and activity is safe</li> <li>• We check with the handler(s) and set a limit for the number of children who can interact with a dog at once</li> <li>• Handler(s) clean up urine and faeces</li> <li>• School staff remove children who misbehave or upset dogs</li> <li>• We set a time limit on activities as recommended by handlers, so dogs do not get tired</li> </ul> | Pupils will be in groups of 10 and will have approximately 20 minutes with Teddy. 3 groups per afternoon.  |
| Damage caused to school materials, equipment and the school site | Dogs                             | Low    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dogs remain on a lead at all times</li> <li>• Dogs are kept in secured rooms, with closed doors</li> <li>• Handlers bring suitable toys if necessary</li> <li>• Areas/classrooms are cleared as much as possible before dogs visit</li> </ul>  | <p>Teddy to be based in SLT office.</p> <p>Teddy to have a selection of toys and treats to keep him occupied.</p> <p>MD and AR (cleaners) to be made aware of Teddy being in school.</p> |