

DOG IN SCHOOL POLICY



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. Since Luna has joined The Bishops' there have been numerous research projects undertaken and media promotion around the positive impact a school dog can have. These can be found online.

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 Mr Evans
- The dog is a cockapoo chosen for its very mild temperament and non-moulting coat
- Mr Waters, Headteacher, and the Chair of Governors, Mrs Uzzell, have both 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. At the start of each academic year 5E receive lessons on Luna and take home leaflets from the Dogs Trust. It is part of their homework that they share these leaflets along with their classroom learning with their parents/carers. Parents are given an opportunity to speak with Mr Evans regarding Luna and receive the same albeit shortened lesson on Luna at Parents' Meeting
- Mr Evans, Class Teacher, has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually
- 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 and their class teachers make Mr Evans aware.
- If the dog is ill she will not be allowed into school
- The dog will normally 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 (primarily Mr Evans). Before removing the dog from the lead all those present will be consulted
- 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

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- 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 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 she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment
- Children should not feed, or eat close to the dog. (Under strict supervision children are allowed to treat the dog's obedient behavior. This does not have to involve a child placing a treat to the dog's mouth. Instead it can be a child placing a treat on the floor which the dog can then enjoy once commanded)
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately

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. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to Mr Evans or the adult who is caring for the dog at any given time.

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

The Site Manager is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance, as and when required.

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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, and here at The Bishops', 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. When Luna spends time in a class teachers report a greater level of calm in the classroom and students' emotional well-being. Recently Luna had a positive impact on a class who are known to struggle with their behavior and this behavior had been detrimental to learning in the past. Recently parents have reported that their children in 5E have far less friendship issues in school.

Attendance

Ever since a dog has been present in Mr Evans's classroom the dog has helped the class to achieve the highest attendance award. She has improved the attendance of children from other classes who work with the dog and also reading club. There are currently several children around school whose attendance has been a concern in the past but since working with Luna has greatly improved. (This is especially the case for a young girl in Year 1).

Attendance (+0.54%), Authorised Absence (-0.38%), Unauthorised Absence (-0.16%), Late Marks (-0.99%) and Unexplained Absence (-0.02%) have all improved positively for Luna's current class when compared against their previous year.

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. Students' behavior has improved toward teachers, and students also have showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents report that children seem more interested in school as a result of having a dog at school.

Staff, children and parents have all reported the above at The Bishops'. This has been apparent even more so this year as seen in the parent questionnaires. Parents were asked if Luna has a positive impact on their child/children at The Bishops' to which 94% agreed.

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.

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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.

In Mr Evans's class last year there was significant progress in children's chronological reading age. Last year only three children finished the year below their chronological age compared with thirteen at the beginning of the year. Every day a child has an opportunity to read with Luna twice. The dog has also joined the targeted reading club before school.

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.

Mr Evans's class have shown a significant improvement in their team spirit and as a community. Selected children around school have also greatly benefited.

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, golden 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.

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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.

This year Luna has been working alongside our school counselor and some of our most vulnerable children. The counselor has reported that Luna is having a significant impact on the session she is having with the children. This is continuing and the school councilor is reporting that Luna is an integral part of many of the students' sessions.

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 has also had a significant positive impact on the staff and parents in our community with many taking pleasure in seeing and spending time with the dog.

In the past year Luna was invited to the Healthy Schools Award Ceremony where Mr Evans delivered a talk to schools from all over Chelmsford. Two schools have since contacted The Bishops' asking for support in acquiring their own school dog including one school visiting us for the afternoon.

Schools across the country have continued to make contact regarding Luna and her involvement here at The Bishops'. Also three local schools in the Chelmsford area have visited to see the positive impact she makes daily.

Policy reviewed: January 2018

Next review: January 2019

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