



TITLE: School Dog Policy

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

This document constitutes version 1 of the **School Dog Policy** and was **adopted** in November 2024 by the **Governing Board**.

This document was reviewed by the **Headteacher in November 2025** and is next subject to a **full review in November 2026** by the Headteacher.

The school conducted an Equality impact Assessment on this policy in November 2025.

Aims

Children will be able to 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, research has shown that children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Risk Assessment

A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendices). 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. A letter will be sent to all stakeholders of the school introducing Hilda Buttercakes and provide a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. Should any other questions be raised, Mr. Clarke will answer these.

School Policy

The dog is owned by Mr. Clarke. Hilda will attend school alongside Mr. Clarke's working hours. She is fully vaccinated. Mr. Clarke has private insurance for Hilda's health and well-being. Hilda is also covered through the school's public liability insurance.

- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come onto the site unless they are a known therapy dog, and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand and given written consent.
- The Governing Body agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of our school.

- Governors, staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. Mr. Clarke has produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the governing body. This will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. A list of people who are allergic will be kept on SIMs. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- 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 the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children 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. Children should not put their face near the dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children must wash their hands before and after stroking the dog, and use only their hands to touch the dog.
- Children should never go near, or disturb, the dog when she is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, 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 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, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke Hilda on her body, chest, back and not by her face or top of head.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately. A specified area within the school grounds has been identified to ensure that the children do not come into contact with faeces.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their pupils access to the dog.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog, and which staff are supervising, at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mr. Clarke and the office staff.
- The dog will not come to school if Mr. Clarke is not present.

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. 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.

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:

Some children find entering the school day a daunting exercise which can lead to refusal to engage for the rest of the day. The dog can help to distract, calm and engage the child thereby motivating them into starting the day positively.

Education:

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. 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, using dogs to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. The dog can help older pupils communicate, expect and show kindness, learn empathy whilst developing their nurturing skills. With a dog in school, pupils 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 school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils 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 the dog. 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 pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils who have struggled with friendships, may be going through upsetting/difficult times or are scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the pupils they meet and is 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 1: Dogs in School Risk Assessment

Assessment conducted by: John Clarke, Headteacher

Covered by this assessment: Hilda Buttercakes

Risk rating		Likelihood of occurrence		
		Probable	Possible	Remote
Likely impact	Major Causes major physical injury, harm or ill-health.	High (H)	H	Medium (M)
	Severe Causes physical injury or illness requiring first aid.	H	M	Low (L)
	Minor Causes physical or emotional discomfort.	M	L	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Policy and procedures	H	- The headteacher ensures that all staff, and where appropriate, pupils and their parents, are aware of and adhere to the following school policies: - Health and Safety Policy - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy - First Aid Policy - Behaviour Policy - Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy - Headteacher ensures that the school's insurance covers using the dog for the specific planned activities, e.g. having a therapy dog. - The Headteacher ensures that the dog is cared for in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	M
Dog's welfare	M	- The dog has access to fresh, clean water at all times. - The dog has access to a cool and quiet place where it can be left undisturbed. - Pupils leave the dog alone when instructed by school staff. - The dog's welfare is considered as a priority when planning the activities that it will participate in. - If an activity risks the dog's welfare, the activity is amended.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		- Noise is kept to a minimum during the activities that the dog is participating in. - The Headteacher ensures that the dog has adequate, and frequent, toilet breaks, and any waste is appropriately disposed of. (A set area will be used for this that is not used by any staff, pupils or parents) - The dog is not over-stimulated, as this can lead to potentially dangerous behaviour. - The dog is not made to participate in potentially distressing activities. - The school complies with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. - The dog is familiar with the members of staff and pupils who are participating in the activity with the dog. - Flash photography is not used when the dog is present. - The dog is given opportunities to exercise and move around independently in a secure area, e.g. the headteacher's office. - The Headteacher ensures that the dog is fit to participate in specific activities and is not brought into the school if it is unwell. - If the dog becomes unwell while at school, the dog's owner takes it home.				

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		- Before any activity is carried out, the Headteacher ensures everyone participating in the activity understands how to treat and behave around the dog, e.g. not using flash photography, not shouting or clapping and not running around. - Activities do not cause harm, discomfort or stress to the dog.				
Site Security	M	- At least two adults are appointed to be responsible for the dog. - The site manager ensures that the site is secure and that precautions are in place to limit the chance of the dog getting loose. - The dog is kept on a lead when it is not in its housing or in a secure location, e.g. in the headteacher's office. - The Headteacher ensures that all appropriate doors are closed when the dog is participating in an activity, e.g. in a school hall. - The site manager ensures that the premises are secure, e.g. fences are not broken.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	M
Evacuation procedures	M	- Where necessary, the school's Emergency Management Plan is reviewed to ensure it includes provisions for the dog. - The person handling the dog during specified activities is responsible for the dog's safety during a lockdown or evacuation.	N	John Clarke	27/11/24	M

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		Where the handler is a pupil, e.g. if the dog is participating in a school performance, another appointed member of staff is responsible for the dog's safety.				
Disobedience and dangerous behaviour	M	- The handler is equipped and trained to react to and control any dangerous behaviour. - If the person handling the dog for a specific activity is a pupil, they are given training to handle the dog, and the pupil and dog are given an opportunity to bond. - Pupils are not expected to handle the dog unless: - their parents have provided permission; - they feel safe and confident in doing so; - they have received training to handle the dog. - The dog's obedience is ensured as far as reasonably possible; however, staff, pupils, visitors and parents understand that animals can be unpredictable. - The Headteacher ensures that a plan is in place for if the dog is unable to carry out an activity, e.g. if the dog is stressed, and participating in the activity would cause further distress or could lead to dangerous behaviour.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		If the dog is not behaving appropriately during an activity, e.g. it is barking excessively or running away, the Headteacher removes the dog and a contingency plan is implemented. For example, if the dog is participating in a school performance, but is nervous about going onto the stage, the Headteacher uses a toy dog instead.				
Parent notification/permission	M	- The Headteacher informs parents that the dog will be present on the school's premises. - Parents are informed of the activities that the dog will be participating in, e.g. the dog will be performing in a school production or used as a therapy dog. - The Headteacher obtains consent from parents for pupils to be in proximity with, or to handle, the dog. - Parents are informed if they are likely to come into contact with the dog, e.g. at a school performance. - Parents are asked to inform the school if their child has an allergy to dogs.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L
Dog's health	L	- The dog's designated handler is in charge of feeding and caring for the dog while on the school premises. - The handler is responsible for permitting people to touch the dog.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		- The dog is given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises. - The dog is fully inoculated. - The dog goes to the vet for regular check-ups - On hot days, the handler ensures there are appropriate provisions in place to keep the dog cool, and ensure the dog avoids too much activity during the hottest part of the day.				
Hygiene	L	- The dog is suitably toilet trained. - The designated area for the dog to defecate is situated away from pupils and staff. - All faeces are immediately picked up by the handler, using a clinical waste bag, and disposed of into a clinical waste bin. - The handler immediately washes their hands with sufficient soap and water after picking up faeces. - Any soiled dog bedding is immediately disposed of in sealed clinical waste bags and placed into a clinical waste bin. - The handler takes the dog's bedding home regularly to wash it. - Any pupils, staff and visitors who touch the dog are advised to wash their hands afterwards, and sufficient hand washing facilities are provided throughout the school.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		• Anyone with an exposed wound who touches the dog has the wound suitably covered. • If the dog is ill with an infection or a disease, it does not return to the school until it has recovered. • Hand sanitiser is provided for anyone who touches the dog.				
Injuries	M	• The dog is well trained and is used to coming into close contact with people. • Pupils, staff and visitors around the dog are closely supervised by the handler. • Pupils, staff and visitors are advised not to put their face close to the dog. • The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. • Pupils, staff and visitors are only permitted to stroke the dog during allocated timeslots. • The dog is provided with a place it can go to get away from people. • The dog is trained to not pull on the lead or jump up at people.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L
Dog's housing and equipment	L	• The Headteacher ensures that the dog has housing that meets its physical and psychological needs. • The Headteacher ensures that the dog's housing is:	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Dog's housing and equipment		- Secure, e.g. escape proof. - Clean and free from parasites and vermin. - Free from hazards, e.g. sharp edges. - Well-ventilated. - Set at a suitable temperature, humidity and light level. - Sheltered from noises that may upset it. - Capable of providing a darkened sleeping area. • The Headteacher ensures that the dog's housing has: - A comfortable resting area. - A suitable amount of clean bedding material. • The Headteacher ensures that the dog is able to: - Lie fully stretched out. - Turn around without touching either the walls or the ceiling. - Stand in its natural posture. - Move in its natural manner. - Rest comfortably. • All dog's bedding/housing is checked for defects on a weekly basis by the Headteacher. • All dog equipment is stored in the headteacher's office when not in use.				

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		- The dog's food and water bowls are kept out of the path of people to avoid any trips. - Any spillages from the dog's bowls are wiped up immediately.				
Allergies	M	- Pupils and staff known to have allergies to animals have restricted access to the dog. - All pupils, staff and visitors are advised not to touch their face after touching the dog. - All pupils, staff and visitors are advised to wash their hands thoroughly after touching the dog. - A supply of antihistamine tablets is kept in the main office in case anyone has an allergic reaction. - The Headteacher establishes whether parents have allergies to dogs, and activities where parents may come into contact with the dog, e.g. at a school performance, are amended as necessary.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L
Phobias	M	- Pupils and staff known to have a phobia of dogs are given restricted access to the dog. - The dog is prohibited from roaming freely around the school without the supervision of the handler. - During busy times, such as breaks, the dog is kept in a safe and secure area away from any commotion.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
[New] Coronavirus (COVID-19)						
Awareness of policies and procedures	L	- The Headteacher ensures that all appropriate staff, pupils and their parents, are aware of and adhere to school policies. - The Headteacher considers whether it is safe to resume therapy visits or sessions and postpones them where necessary, e.g. if the dog or their handler is unwell.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L
Dog's health and welfare	L	- If the dog becomes unwell whilst at the school, the handler calls the vet and keeps the dog away from pupils, staff and any members of the public. Gloves and a face covering are worn when caring for the dog. - Face coverings are not put on the dog as this can cause harm. - The dog is not allowed to lick or give 'kisses' to any individuals.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L
Infection control	L	- Contact with the dog is limited only to those participating in the session or visit. - Sessions are limited to 2 pupils in addition to the handler and 1 member of school staff. - Before and after each contact with the dog, the handler and all individuals wash their hands – individuals do not touch any part of their face with unwashed hands.	Y	John Clarke	27/11/24	L

Area for concern	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	Recommended controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		• Handlers and children should only touch the dog with their hands. • The dog's lead, collar, harness and other supplies are disinfected regularly. • Items that are usually handled by multiple people, e.g. toys and blankets, are not used during sessions or visits.				