



Brentfield Primary School

Children of Today, Champions for Tomorrow

School Dog Policy

Head Teacher	Mrs N. Harmer
Person Responsible	Ms S. Rawat
Reviewed	September 2024
Next Review Date	September 2025

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1. Introduction

We believe that our school dog will be a unique way to enrich all areas of our children's wider education, skills and well-being and promote our Brave values. However, the integration of a school dog must be carefully managed to comply with relevant regulations and ensure the safety and welfare of pupils, staff, visitors, and the dog.

This policy applies to our school dog 'Poppy' only. It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property.

Please also refer to the School Dog Risk assessment (appendix 1)

2. The Benefits of a School Dog

Research has shown that the introduction of a school dog can benefit children educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog.

In addition to the above, a school dog can:

- Improve attendance and punctuality.
- Increase literacy skills.
- Promote calming behaviours.
- Increase motivation.
- Improve social development: social skills, self-esteem and responsibility.

"If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience."

Bark & Read – The Kennel Club (<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

"Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment."

Therapy Dogs Nationwide (<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

"There is emerging evidence to suggest that Animal Assisted Psychotherapy improves the efficacy of mental health treatments in self-selected adolescent populations via reductions in primary symptomatology, and via secondary factors that improve therapeutic processes and quality, such as engagement and retention".

Incorporating animal-assisted therapy in mental health treatments for adolescents: A systematic review of canine assisted psychotherapy Melanie G. Jones, Simon M. Rice, Susan M. Cotton. 2019; 14(1), 2019.

3. Legal and Compliance Obligations

- Animal Welfare Act 2006: Outline the school's responsibility under this act to ensure the dog's welfare.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974: Cover the school's obligations to manage risks associated with having a dog in the school.

- Equality Act 2010: Discuss provisions for accessibility and the consideration of allergies and phobias.

4. Dog Suitability

Careful consideration has been given to the following:

- **Breed Considerations:** Poppy is a F1B Cavapoo. Which means that she is 75% Poodle and 25% Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. She has been selected for her increased hypoallergenic qualities and low-shedding coat. She has a calm temperament and will be small dog when fully grown.
- **Health Clearances:** Poppy has regular and up-to-date vaccinations and relevant treatments.
- **Temperament Testing:** Poppy has been socialised with children and young people before meeting pupils at Brentfield. She has been gradually exposed to the noises of school and is familiar with the school building.

5. Dog Welfare

- **Living Arrangements:** Whilst at school, our school dog resides in the Inclusion Room where she has a quiet space away from the hustle and bustle of school. When out of school, she will reside with her primary caretaker, Ms Rawat.
- **Diet and Exercise and Rest:** The school dog has carefully planned guidelines for her feeding schedules and exercise routines and times when she will rest. This will be managed by the Inclusion Lead.
- **Healthcare Plan:** The school dog is insured. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks are up-to-date. If the school dog is unwell, she will not take part in any school activities.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Governors:** The Governing Body has the responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy in place.
- **Headteacher:** Has the responsibility to ensure that that the policy is implemented.
- **School Dog Caretaker:** The Inclusion Lead, Ms Rawat, is the designated primary caretaker and is responsible for all training and day-to-day care needs of the school dog as well as ensuring that she is always supervised when in contact with pupils.
- **Staff, Pupil, Parents and Visitors:** Staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy and are required to always act with care.

7. Day-to-Day Management

The dog will:

- During school hours, be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk.
- Be always under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Not enter areas with large groups of children such as the playground.

Our pupils will:

- Not be left alone with the dog.

- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet her:
 - Always remain calm and quiet.
 - Not disturb the school dog when she is eating or sleeping.
 - Not feed the dog.
 - Allow the school dog to sniff and be near them before reaching out to touch her.
 - Be gentle.

If the school dog is displaying any signs of distress, she will be immediately removed from that situation or environment by the supervising adult.

Staff meetings, assemblies and classroom learning will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around dogs including information that is specific to our school dog.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.