SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL
SINCE 1576

Dog Policy

(Prep School)

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This Policy applies to Sutton Valence School (including, as the context requires, the Nursery and the Prep School).

Introduction

This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dogs to be present. 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 often great enjoyment from interaction with a dog. involved. This policy sets out how this will be achieved. It has been written with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in mind.

Risk Management

There are a variety of other risks within the school environment which we manage. Therefore, having dogs on site 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 2).

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 Prep School and individual dog handlers are responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

Curriculum

The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around the dogs. 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 dogs 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 school refusing
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, show empathy for the dog, and can then better understand how classmates may feel. It was found that violent behaviour in participating students declined and general aggression went down. 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: Having dogs in school has been shown to improve attendance and reduce the likelihood of persistent absence for some pupils. Dogs have been used to entice some potential school refusers into school and have also been used to support these children when in school.

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 of reading to a dog. Dogs are sometimes used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud. With a presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are often 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-judgemental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emergent 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 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 and 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. 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 of a dog at school.

As a reward: Dogs can 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, 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-one basis and will especially help those students who have been going through upsetting or difficult times or even might be scared or 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.

Specific Details

- The dogs are owned by different teachers and not by the School. The dogs are all family dogs of who have benefitted from training, are sociable and friendly.
- Only the school dogs and assistance dogs are allowed on the site.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that dogs will be in school.
- A risk assessment has been produced, and this will be reviewed at least annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dogs.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there are dogs in school.
- If the dogs are ill, they will not be allowed in school.
- The dogs will be kept on leads when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children will never be left alone with a dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Children should remain calm and should not make sudden movements and startle the dogs. Children should not put their faces near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dogs when they are sleeping or eating.
- Children will not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- The dogs should be on all fours before anyone interacts with them.
- If the dogs are surrounded by a large number of children, the dogs could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dogs must ensure that they monitor 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 the owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dogs are displaying any of these warning signs they should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dogs.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately by the staff member in charge of each dog and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to a dog for specific educational purposes.
- The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure.

Other dogs

With the exception of specifically trained assistance dogs, parents and visitors may not bring their dogs onto the School grounds. For assistance dogs only, the following expectations must be followed:

1. All dogs must remain on a lead at all times.
2. Any fouling must be fully cleared up and disposed of appropriately as soon as possible after this happens.
3. If there is concern for pupils or other visitors, school staff may require the assistance dog to leave the premises or be returned to a car. The dog handler must follow these instructions without question.

Concerns and Complaints

If someone reports having an issue with the dogs, this information must be passed to the Head of Prep School, School Office or dog handlers as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by Head of Prep School or dog handlers in the first instance.

As with all School policies and operations, the School Complaints Procedure may be invoked if required.

Appendix 1: School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Who are the legal owners of the School Dogs and who pays their costs?
The legal owner of each dog is a member of staff who will care for them and will bear all the costs associated with having a pet dog.

2. Are the dogs from reputable breeders?
Yes, all dogs' breeders were searched for very carefully. Information regarding both dogs' parents and their temperament was considered.

3. Will the school dogs be a distraction?
The dogs will have a rest/quiet space where they will reside unless they are being used in other parts of the School. At all times we will ensure the dogs only come into contact with children who are happy to have contact with a dog under strict supervision.

4. Will the dogs roam freely around the school?
Certainly not. The dogs will be on their leads at all times when moving around school and when interacting with children. The only time the dogs will be off their leads are when they are resting or sleeping.

5. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
Yes – a formal risk assessment has taken place. We have carefully considered having dogs in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have school dogs.

6. Who will be responsible for the training?
Individual staff are the legal owners of the school dogs and it is their responsibility to train the dogs. Appropriate training has taken place from when they were puppies and is still ongoing.

7. How will the dogs be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?
The dogs have access to a separate garden at the back of School House to which children are not permitted. The dogs will also be walked around our large site and, in the eventuality that they foul anywhere, this will be cleared up by the dog handler at once.

8. When will the dogs come into school?
The dogs will be in school at different times and on different days depending upon the plans of each dog handler. There will always be a poster in the School Office forewarning all visitors about the presence of dogs on the School site.

9. How will the dogs' welfare be considered?
The dogs have taken part in familiarisation training, getting them used the School, the noises they may hear and being in busy crowds. They dogs have access to private premises and offices as well as a private garden. The dogs will regularly be walked and have plenty of opportunities to play and go to the toilet. The dogs will be kept in School offices with their handlers; these spaces are quiet places. Visitors to these spaces will always be informed about a dog being present and, if they are concerned, the meeting or the dog will be moved. The dogs will be provided with food, unlimited access to water, a bed, treats and of course their favourite toys! The dogs will receive

ongoing training and we will work very closely with other professionals to ensure their welfare is always carefully considered.

10. What happens if my child has an allergy to dogs?

Children will not need to interact with the dogs unless of course they wish to do so. This will therefore relieve some of the possibility of reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school, and this will be no different for those 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 where needed.

11. My child is afraid of dogs. How will this be managed?

Access to the school dogs will be carefully managed and supervised. Children will not need to have any contact with the dogs unless they are keen to do so or their parents give express permission. Nonetheless, we hope to work closely with any children fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and help them manage it.

Appendix 2: Risk Assessment

Risk assessment – Staff Dogs on site	
Location(s):	Prep Site
Department/staff:	Whole Prep School (including Nursery)
Tasks/activities:	Visiting lessons, playgrounds, wellbeing guided activities
Other information:	Biscuit (Golden Labrador) - responsible adult: Hannah Moys Sally (Cockapoo) - responsible adult: Sandra Champanhet Ozzy (Golden Doodle) - responsible adult: Mark Scholey

Risk assessment sign off					
Prepared by:	S Champanhet	Signature:		Date:	September 2025
Reviewed by:	M Scholey	Signature:		Date:	September 2025
Pet insurance confirmation by dog owners.	S Champanhet	Signature:		Date:	
	M Scholey	Signature:		Date:	
	H Moys	Signature:		Date:	
Date for review:	This risk assessment should be reviewed if additional risks not covered are identified or if there is any reason to suggest that the control measures are deemed to be insufficient.				

Risk matrix

Risk rating guidance

Likelihood (L)						
5	5	10	15	20	25	Likelihood (L) x Severity (S) = Risk rating (RR).
4	4	8	12	16	20	
3	3	6	9	12	15	
2	2	4	6	8	10	
1	1	2	3	4	5	
	1	2	3	4	5	
	Severity (S)					

Acceptability of risk guidance

High risk: 15-25	High-risk activities should cease immediately. Further effective control measures to mitigate risks must be introduced.
Medium risk: 8-12	Medium risks should only be tolerated for the short term and only whilst further control measures to mitigate the risks are being planned and introduced.
Low risk: 1-6	Low risks are largely acceptable. Where it is reasonable to do so, efforts should be made to reduce risks further.

Guidance. When completing a risk assessment, you should:

Identify the persons at risk and the significant hazards.
Calculate an initial RR for the activity.
Identify risk control measures that reduce the risks to an acceptable level.
Calculate a revised RR - you should consider how much safer the task will be if the control measures are followed. Here, you should consider changing both the likelihood (L) and the severity (S) ratings.

Note. Ideally, you should look to reduce the risks so that the task can be classified as “low risk”.

Risk Assessment						
Activity	**Persons at risk**	**Significant hazards**	**Initial**			**Risk control measures**
			L	**S**	**RR**	
Hygiene	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Dog handling - Infection/cross contamination from dog – possible exposure to canine bacteria	**3**	**3**	**9**	• Thorough handwashing routines in place after any contact with dogs. • Accidents cleared up with anti-bacterial products by adults. • Dog mess cleared up immediately by adults only. • Dogs encouraged not to lick. • Dogs to be accompanied at all times when walking around school premises.
Hygiene	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Dog mess on school site.	**2**	**3**	**6**	• Dogs to be taken for a walk before or after school day to minimise need to excrete on site. • Dogs to be offered toileting away from children. • Dogs will require a walk during the school day. • Any mess to be appropriately cleaned away. • Dog-poo bags to be in constant supply.
Hygiene	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Parasites	**2**	**4**	**8**	• Dogs will be vaccinated, wormed and flea protected in accordance with the vet's recommendation. Dogs checked over regularly for parasites. • Dogs will be kept clean and well groomed. • Dogs' bedding will be regularly washed.
Dog hair causing allergic/asthmatic reaction	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Allergic reactions	**3**	**3**	**9**	• Parents have been asked to inform the school of any known allergies prior to introduction of the dog to school. A list of any children who should not interact with the dog will be kept by the office staff. • Staff members will also be asked to inform the school of any allergies. • Fully supervised, children will have the opportunity to interact with the dogs as they wish and

						those with allergies will be able to opt out of interaction. • Children will be taught to wash their hands after active participation with the dogs. • Flea treatment will be carried out at regular intervals. Worming treatment is carried out in line with European Vet guidelines. • If a dog is sick, the dog will not come into school until better. • The dogs will never go into a food preparation area and/ or the kitchen.
Dog bites/scratches	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Dog becoming over excited when interacting with children/visitors.	**2**	**3**	**6**	• The temperaments of the dogs have been and will continue to be assessed to ensure that they are well-behaved around children. • The dogs will always be in the care of the responsible adult and will never be allowed to freely roam the school premises unsupervised. • The dogs are trained not to jump up, paw or bite the children. • Pupils will be taught what to do to prevent the dog from distressing them. (i.e. stand still with arms crossed over their bodies – 'standing tall like a tree'). • Children who are misbehaving or upsetting the dogs will be asked to stop. • Children will be taught how to approach and speak to the dog in an appropriate and safe way. • Children will be taught not to handle sticks and balls around the dog unless supervised by the responsible adult.
Dog phobia	Children, staff, parents, visitors, dog	Anxiety caused by close proximity to dog- including those	**3**	**1**	**3**	• Dogs on site poster displayed in school to increase awareness. • Parents have been made aware by letter that dogs will be on site. • A list of children to be aware of will be available.

		with religious beliefs that do not allow contact with dogs.				• Crate and separate spaces are available in certain circumstances. • If there is an identified phobia/anxiety the dog is not banned from coming to school but every effort is made to segregate the dog from the people with phobias/ anxiety.
Dog Barking	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Noise/ disruption to learning/inducement of fear.	**2**	**1**	**2**	• Dogs chosen not predisposed to barking. • Dogs will largely be kept in areas away from main classrooms to avoid disruption to lessons.
Fire/lockdown and other emergencies	Staff and dog	Emergency situations such as fire evacuation procedures - Responsibility for dogs being evacuated in an emergency.	**1**	**2**	**2**	• Whoever is responsible/with the dogs at the point of alarm should bring them to the assembly point (on a lead). There they will be handed over to their owner/a responsible adult who will keep them calm/restrained for the duration of emergency procedures. • Where possible, the dog will be present for sounding of the alarms outside of school hours to observe their response. • If the dogs manage to escape from an adult during the evacuation, the adult must still evacuate immediately and notify staff outside of the dog's absence

Dog Walking	Staff, dog, children	Child/staff knocked to ground. Child/staff scratched by dog. Child/staff bitten by dog.	**1**	**2**	**2**	• The dogs are always on the lead when walking around the school grounds, unless in a supervised, enclosed space with their responsible adult. • Adults to assess the child as to whether they can hold the lead independently. Children are reminded how to keep safe at all times. • Adults will pick up any dog excrement and will remind children of the importance of washing hands on return to school building. • Children will be given the choice if they would like to stroke the dog. • All members of school community to be vigilant to look where they are walking to avoid tripping over the dog.
Animal welfare	Children, staff, parents, visitors	Negative behaviour caused by stress, bites or scratches.	**2**	**4**	**8**	• Ensure dogs have time and space away from the children undisturbed. • Ensure dogs only interact with the children in short bursts and are not crowded by children/adults (although they enjoy all attention!). •
Financial cost	Staff, dog, children, members of the public	Claim made against the school / not adequate cover	**1**	**2**	**2**	The school insurance provider has confirmed the following. The school's liability will cover staff dogs on site provided that – • The owner of the dog has pet insurance that includes liability cover. The school should obtain and retain evidence of this annually. • Risk assessments are completed and include supervision, allergies etc

						The school's liability will only extend to cover any injury or damage caused to a third party as a result of the school's negligence. It will not offer cover for vet bills etc, this would have to be covered by the owner of the dog. • Due to above, only dogs with pet insurance will be permitted on site. • Each dog owner will be required to sign this risk assessment as confirmation.