



## School Dog Policy (September 2023)

### 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.

*Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment? Yes 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. A thorough risk assessment has been carried out and this is included in this document (see appendix 3).*

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

### School Policy

The School dogs will be owned by Mrs Cottam (Blue) and Mrs King (Sonny).

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- 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 Principal has given prior permission.
- The School dogs are a Black Labrador and a Golden Retriever chosen because they are intelligent breeds that will respond well to training and which are known to be good with children, shedding little hair. Both breeds are very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. Mr Settle, Principal, has produced a risk assessment and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If either dog is ill he will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when deemed appropriate and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult or nominated student/s.
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs. Everyone must wait until Blue or Sonny 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. Therefore the person in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.



- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog via an opt out agreement.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Head of relevant department asap.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dogs. This includes Mrs Cottam, Mrs Settle, Mrs King and Miss Henson.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Cottam, Mrs King or Mr Lomax.

### Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Principal or a Deputy Heads as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the relevant Head of Department.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School. The Principal 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.

### 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 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, 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 anxiety. 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 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 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, 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 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. Older students use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students. 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 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 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. 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 dogs will be Mrs Cottam (Blue - Prep School) and Mrs King (Senior School) ; they will bear the receptive costs associated with owning the dogs; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

**Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder?** Yes. Both dogs are pedigrees and Kennel club registered. Blue and Wilfy have clear hip and eye scores and are from a home where both parents were seen and have been specifically chosen for his temperament.

**Q Will the dog be a distraction?** The dog will be kept in the office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this. The dogs will also have a space to spend time in classrooms, the library and small soft play area where children can interact safely. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

**Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?** 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 and a reputable dog behaviourist.

**Q Who is responsible for training?** Mrs Cottam and Mrs King are responsible for all training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog through 'Wuff Dog Training Cambridge' with advice from the Pets As Therapy charity. Wilf work towards PAT assessment at 9 months when he will become a fully qualified Cambridge PAT dog. Blue has already qualified but die to COVID and not being allowed to work he now has to recertify.

**Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?** In the interest of health and hygiene our school dogs will be toileted when taken out for short walks outside of school and on Parkers Piece. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

**Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?** The dogs will be walked regularly and given free time outside when children are in lessons. 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 lunchtime. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the admin area/Assistant Principal Academic/Head of Seniors office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dogs will be carefully trained over a period of time and 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?** Children will not need to touch



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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 that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met where possible and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dogs are known for minimal moulting, they are<sup>2</sup> given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

*Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?* Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with Blue or Sonny. 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



## Appendix 3

### School Dog Risk Assessment

#### Purpose

1. Dogs teach children responsibility. Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction that they can't get from school or other chores. The relationship that develops can be life-changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.
2. Dogs teach children patience. Dogs do not always do as they are told first time!
3. Dogs teach children compassion. Just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain. They are prone to injuries and the infirmities of age during their relatively short lives.
4. Dogs teach children about socialisation. Like most of us, dogs are social animals who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children. If they can learn the social cues of a dog, then interacting with humans who can talk will be a walk in the park (pun intended).
5. Dogs are fun. Last, but certainly not least, dogs are a lot of fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day.

Many people have studied dogs in attempts to decipher their behaviour, and the theories abound. However, you just have to witness the interactions between dogs and children to realise the potential for greatness. Dogs can sense when children with epilepsy are about to have a seizure, they can sense when a diabetic child's sugar is low, and they can help children with severe physical disabilities find happiness in life. With the proper training and supervision, a dog can enrich a child's life. After all, dogs are basically four-legged children who never grow up!



Area: Interaction with pupils and staff				
Reason: To ensure the school dog interacts appropriately at all times				
Step 1 Identify the hazards	Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?	Step 3 What are you already doing?	Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop	Step 4 Is anything further needed?
School dog biting a child or adult	Child or adult could be hurt if the school dog bites	The school dog is being trained not to bite. When the dog is approached in the correct way there is very limited danger. Blue lives with Mrs Cottam and her children who handle him all the time to ensure that he is used to interaction with children	Low	Ensure that children and adults do not interact with the school dog without supervision. Ensure that all interaction with the school dog is completed in the agreed way
Running loose	If the school dog was to run loose he could accidentally	The school dog will be contained at all times either in an office (with a clear sign on	Low	Monitor that the equipment used to contain the school

	hurt children/adults or damage property	the door), in a cage or on a lead		dog is appropriate and effective
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Direct interaction with children/ staff	If the school dog is allowed to interact when not in the correct frame of mind children/ staff could be scratched	No interaction is allowed without authorisation. Interaction will be cancelled if the school dog shows signs of incorrect behaviour. Rewards/praise will be given to reinforce the desired behaviour	Medium	Ensure that the dog is approached in the agreed manner
Destruction of materials	If allowed the school dog may chew/destroy some school materials/resources	The school dog will be contained at all times. The school dog will have his own toys to play with and normal school resources will be removed	Low	Monitor that the equipment used to contain the school dog is appropriate and effective

Area: Pupils and staff interaction with the school dog

Reason: To ensure the school dog is effectively supported to interact appropriately at all times

Step 1 Identify the hazards	Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?	Step 3 What are you already doing?	Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop	Step 4 Is anything further needed?
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Incorrect / inconsistent interaction with dog	If a child/adult interact with the school dog in the incorrect or inconsistent way this will affect the school dogs training and have a negative impact on future interaction	Agreed guidelines that must be followed at all times when interacting with the school dog. There cannot be any interaction with the school dog without authorisation	Medium	If there are any inconsistencies in approach with the school dog the adult/child will have the interaction stopped
Use of rewards / treats	Children and adults could be harmed if the school dog is over excited when receiving a reward/treat. Children/adult must clean their hands after handling treats	Alcohol gel will be available to all adults (and children with written permission from parents). Treats will only be given to the school dog with authorisation	Low	Reminders to the children to wash hands / use alcohol gel after handling treats. Treats to be locked away to ensure they can only be used after authorisation
Pupil/staff knowledge of interaction with a puppy / dog	If adults and children have limited knowledge of how to interact correctly this could result in harm to the school dog or themselves	The Dog's Trust will be visiting each year group to conduct a 'Be Dog Smart' course with all of the children	Medium	There will be an agreed format for how to interact with the school dog



Area: Hygiene / Health				
Reason: To ensure that pupils, staff and the school dog do not have an increased risk of illness as a result of the school dog being in school				
Step 1 Identify the hazards	Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?	Step 3 What are you already doing?	Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop	Step 4 Is anything further needed?
Worms / fleas	If the school dog is not treated for worms there is a danger that germs can be transferred to humans	The school dog will follow a flea and worming programme as agreed by the vets.	Low	Monitor that vet visits happen promptly and take actions suggested by the vet
Faeces	If a child/adult come into contact with the school dog's faeces some germs could be transferred	The school dog will only be walked under supervision. No child will be asked to pick up the dog's faeces, this will always be undertaken by the adult in supervision	Low	The school dog will be walked outside of the school premises.



Allergies	If a child is allergic to dogs they could become unwell	Children will not be in contact with the school dog if we have received a negative response form from parents/guardians. If a child has an allergy the school dog will not carry out tasks near the child	Medium	
Children's access to school dog's resource	If a child has access to the school dog's treats/food and eats some they could become unwell	All of the school dog's resources will be locked away. No child will be allowed to enter the school dog's area without authorisation	Low	Remind children not to enter area
Contact with food preparation areas	If the school dog enters a food preparation area this could be unhygienic	The school dog will be in a contained area or on a lead at all times around school. He will never enter the school kitchen	Trivial	
Cleaning hands after interacting with the school dog	If hands are not cleaned children/adults could become unwell	All adults and children will clean their hands after interaction with the school dog	Low	Remind children and adults to clean their hands

Area: Activities involving the school dog, including walking



Reason: To ensure that the school dog has a meaningful and safe impact on the school community				
Step 1 Identify the hazards	Step 2 Who might be harmed & how?	Step 3 What are you already doing?	Risk Rating Trivial / low / medium / high / stop	Step 4 Is anything further needed?
Walking the dog on and off the site	Children could be harmed during a walk offsite if they are not focussed. Children might be harmed if they do not interact correctly when the school dog is on a walk	If the school dog is taken off site normal risk assessed procedure will take place. No children will take the lead when the school dog goes for a walk unless authorised to do so by accompanying adult. No children will be allowed to interact with the school dog when he is on a walk unless permission is given	Medium	Careful consideration needs to be given to the amount of time the school dog is allowed to walk around school during play/lunch times
Visits to classroom	If the school dog visits a class and the children do not follow the correct procedure he may become over excited	The school dog will initially only make classroom visits with Mrs Cottam. The children in classrooms will follow the agreed procedure or interaction will stop	Medium	Careful consideration will be given to when the school dog can visit classrooms and be under the control of the class teacher or



				teaching assistant
Being fed	If a child tries to interact when the school dog is eating he may respond aggressively	No child will be allowed in the school dog's contained area when he is eating. Children may prepare the food for the school dog (washing their hands afterwards). All feeding will be supervised	Low	Reminders to the children feeding the school dog to not interact when he is eating
School events	If the school dog is overwhelmed he may become boisterous	The school dog will only attend school events if they are appropriate and he will be under the control of a supervising adult	Low	Monitor the school dog's reaction to school events. If the school events are too overwhelming the school dog might not attend school on that day



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Other dogs (on and off the site)	If the school dog is overwhelmed he	No other dogs will be allowed on the school premises	Low	Monitor the school dogs reaction when out walking
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	may become boisterous	At no Time Will the school dog be Walked by a child and as a result if another dog is seen this will be dealt With by the Supervising adult		
Signature:			Date to be reviewed: July 2024	