



School Dog Policy

Example photo:



Bubwith Community Primary School

Date of This Review	September 2026
Reviewed By	Rebecca Walker
Date Approved by Governing Body	30.06.26
Date of Next Review	Annually

Introduction

There is a strong evidence base from research that human-animal interactions (HAI) have a positive effect for people in a wide range of areas. Beetz et al 2012 stated that positive effects have been demonstrated in areas such as:

- Social behaviour.
- Interpersonal interactions.
- Mood.
- Stress-related parameters.
- Heart rate.
- Blood pressure.
- Fear and anxiety.
- Mental health.
- Cardiovascular diseases.

We also believe that children can benefit in other ways from regular interaction with animals:

- Emotional regulation.
- Increased understanding of responsibility.
- Development of empathy.
- Many children also get great enjoyment out of caring for and interacting with animals.

Operational Information

Only the school dog(s) is allowed on the premises during term time. All other dogs and animals must not come on site in term time unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has given consent and completed risk assessments beforehand.

Staff, parents and children will be informed by the Headteacher in writing that a dog will be in school. This will be done at the start of each academic year for new starters, or if a new school dog starts at the school. This must set out clear arrangements for how parents should to contact school if they do not want their child to interact with the dog.

Risk assessments for each dog will be reviewed annually and signed off by the Headteacher, and approved by the governing body Health and Safety Committee.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs will not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed by reception staff on arrival that there is a dog in school. There will also be displays with information about the school dog(s) in the reception area.

If the dog is ill, they will not be allowed into school and the dog will be kept up-to-date on all vaccinations.

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 will be taught how to behave appropriately around the dogs:

- Remain calm.
- Not make sudden movements.
- Never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
- Put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Children should wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking it.
- 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 and limit the number of pupils at any time around the immediate area of the dog.

Children will be taught to identify how a dog may be feeling and act appropriately. e.g. Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicates 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 it should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

Children should not eat close to the dog and the dog will not enter food preparation areas or be present in rooms where children are eating.

Children should be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.

Children will be trained to always wash their hands after handling a dog.

Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the responsible adult.

Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.

The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of a responsible adult.

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or senior leader as soon as possible.

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school and to ensure that this policy is reviewed annually. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy.

Risk Management

Although there are a variety of accidents, which could happen within the school environment these can be effectively managed through a careful and thorough risk assessment for each dog working within school. A copy of the risk assessment can be obtained from school. These plans set out the specific risk involved and the control measures in place to mitigate the identified risks. Dogs other than those covered by a specific risk assessment are not allowed on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher. This includes drop off and collection times at the beginning and end of the school day.

The following dogs have a risk assessment in place and are authorised to work with children within the school.

Dog Name:

Breed: Cavapoo

Owner: Miss Rebecca Walker

These dogs have been identified due to breed selection and training completed:

- Respond well to training.
- Are known to be good with children.
- Shed little hair and are as close to being hypoallergenic as dogs can be!
- Are sociable and friendly with a gentle temperament.
- Training completed with Kennel Club approved training provider.
- Vaccinations up-to-date.
- Insured.

Appendix 1: Benefits of having a school dog

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:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Increase literacy skills.
- Calming behaviours.
- Increase social skills and self-esteem.
- Increase confidence.
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life.
- Help prevent truancy.
- 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:

- 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%.
- 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.

Reading:

- 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."
- 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 give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers.
- Dogs can 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 shown 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 student's 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.

Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A: The legal owner of the dog will be Miss Walker; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance.

Q: Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A: Yes, a full risk assessment is in place, which will be reviewed regularly. We have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from different sources, including other local schools that successfully have a school dog. Some staff have also experienced working with a school dog in previous settings.

Q: Who is responsible for training?

A: Miss Walker will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its initial training.

Q: How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be taken to an area that has no access to students during the school day - the staff in charge of the dog will ensure that this is cleared away appropriately, leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Should the dog naturally wee on an area of the playground when interacting with students, staff will ensure that this area is not used by students.

Q: How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A: The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will have its own space in Miss Walker's office where it will not be disturbed by pupils. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to food and water. They will spend time becoming used to the school environment, including sounds such as the fire alarm, during the summer holidays and will largely focus on being settled in the environment with no close interactions with children until staff are confident that the dog feels comfortable in the environment. We will limit group sizes working with the dog so that it is not overwhelmed. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered and remove the dog from the school environment if we don't feel it is happy.

Q: How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A: Students will not need to touch 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 students and adults that 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 for individual allergies. Any students with allergies to dogs will be built into the risk assessment as they are made known to the school. The breed of dog has been carefully considered to reduce the risk of allergy reactions.

Q: My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A: Access to the dog will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with them if this has been expressed by parents. 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.

Q: Will other school dogs be allowed in school?

A: Allowing a dog onto the school site can only be approved by the Headteacher and for educational purposes, with a full risk assessment. This is to ensure the safety of dogs and members of our school community.

Q: What type of dog is the puppy?

A: Cavapoo. This breed is known to be child-friendly, lively, gentle mannered, demonstrably affectionate yet sensitive and have an outstanding trainability.

Q: Will the dog be a distraction?

A: The dog would remain primarily in the office or designated areas and would only interact with pupils during supervised, planned sessions in groups or classes. Rather than causing disruption, school dogs often have positive benefits, including reducing stress, supporting emotional wellbeing, and helping pupils develop confidence, responsibility, and social skills. Clear routines, boundaries, and staff supervision ensure the dog enhances the school environment without interfering with learning.

Appendix 3: Insurance documents

Appendix 4: Risk Assessment

Location	Bubwith Community Primary School
Assessment Date	05.09.26
Activity	Keeping a dog onsite/Reading and Therapy dog
Who is at risk?	Employees, Visitors, Contractors, Vulnerable persons, Pupils
Name of School Dog	
Owner of School Dog	

Hazard	Who is affected/At risk	Risk Rating (L,M,H)	Actions/Control Measures	Person Responsible
Bites, scratches or illness caused by the dog	Staff, pupils, visitors, handlers	Low	- Pupils and staff are made aware of the procedures and etiquette on meeting and handling the dog, which will always be under supervision, to ensure any risk is minimised. - The dog is a breed that is very sociable and good natured and adequately trained - All dogs that visit are vaccinated, wormed, and treated for fleas - Dogs on school site are up-to-date with grooming - All staff and pupils wash their hands after contact with the dog - The dog uses a specific area of grass to defecate that is not accessible by pupils during the day. There is a sign informing visitors to stay away from this area - Handler(s) clear up dog faeces promptly and dispose of this safely – pupils are told to stay away - Hand cleansing facilities made available close to where the dog will be housed. - A bag containing poo bags/plastic bags, kitchen roll, antibacterial spray, rubber gloves etc will be available	Headteacher

			• In the unfortunate event that someone should get bitten, the person must be taken to the first aid station to have the affected area cleaned and the appropriate first aid measures taken. • If the person bitten or scratched is a child then their parents must be informed immediately. The child and any children who witnessed the incident must be reassured and the situation explained; why the dog reacted in the way they did to allay any fears that could develop from their experience of the incident. • With respect to school dogs, the school has public liability insurance (also known as third party insurance) to cover unfortunate events when the dog bites or damages the third party's property. This is through Pet Business Insurance for up to one million pound. • If a child has an open injury, whether caused by the dog or by other means, the dog handler must ensure the dog does not lick the open wound. Similarly, children must be taught not to allow the dog to lick the open wound either. • Children do not go near the dog's face or try and hug it. • Children must ask the handler's permission before touching the dog. • The dog does not interact with children when eating and has no access to food preparation areas or the dining hall during meal times.	
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Allergies	Staff and pupils	Low	• We inform parents about children interacting with dogs. Website, newsletters, letters • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies • Enhanced cleaning takes place daily in areas where the dog has been outside of its main office base • Control measures are enforced if there are staff and children who have suffer from allergic reactions caused by dogs. (e.g. restricting the dog's movements to certain areas around the site to prevent contact) Only authorised dogs are allowed on site. The dog breed is selected carefully to ensure low shedding risk. • Ensure parents are aware that the school has a dog and ask parents to inform the school of any allergies their children might have, if they haven't already declared it. • Ensure adrenaline (e.g. epinephrine, EpiPens or Anapens) inhalers, and other medication is readily availability in medical room and that it is up to date. • Contact with dogs is optional.	Headteacher
Phobias	Staff and pupils	Low	• We tell parents and children about the school dog in advance. • Contact with dogs is optional	Headteacher
Activities and games involving the dog	Staff, pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	• Handler(s) remain with dogs at all times • Handler(s) speak to school staff in advance and make sure the area and activity is safe • The handler sets a limit for the number of children who can interact with a dog at once • Handler(s) clean up urine and faeces • School staff remove children who misbehave or upset dogs • We set a time limit on activities as recommended by handler(s), so dogs do not get tired	Headteacher

Inappropriate behaviour of children around dog(s)	Pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	• Children are told in advance what to expect and how to behave • Go through expectations each term in assembly or in classes and with new starters. • School staff are present at all time when children interact with the dog • School staff are ready to remove children who misbehave or upset dogs • All children upon starting at the school and regularly throughout the year, must be told how to behave around the authorised dog. • Children must be free to ask questions so they become more confident around dogs and accustomed to having a dog at school. • Children who are particularly fearful of dogs and unwilling to overcome their fear must have their wishes respected and given appropriate space. The handler(s) must not dismiss the child's dislike/fear to prevent the child from hitting/kicking the dog, which might cause the dog to react defensively.	Headteacher
Damage caused to school materials, equipment and the school site	Dogs	Low	• Dogs are placed on a lead when necessary • Dogs are kept in secured rooms, with closed doors or safety gates • Handler(s) brings suitable toys and plans the dog's timetable to include regular walks and enrichment time • Areas/classrooms are cleared as much as possible before dogs visit	Headteacher
Inexperienced/improper handling of the dog	Pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	• Only confident and experienced staff should handle the dog or be present to supervise any children petting the dog. • All staff to receive some basic, informal training on handling a dog, correct behaviour around the dog etc.	Headteacher
Dog faeces (Toxicariasis) and vomit	Pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	• Dog faeces must be collected immediately afterward the dog has finished in an appropriate manner (e.g. the use of a doggy bag) and only collected by the accompanying adult handler.	Headteacher

Over excited dog or jumping up	Pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	- Dogs are trained to not become over excited with new people and are fully compliant when using the “settle” command. - Authorised dogs must be handled by a confident and able handler. If the dog is over excited or keeps jumping up, the dog must be removed from the situation and taken somewhere to calm down.	Headteacher
Dog’s adverse reaction to loud noises (e.g. fire alarm)	Staff, pupils, dogs and handlers	Medium initially, low over time	- As the dog will be introduced to the school at an early age, it will become acclimatised to a noisy environment so the risk of barking should be greatly minimised. Dog should be removed from the situation that is causing it to bark. - In the event of a fire evacuation the designated responsible handler, who should also be confident and able, must escort the dog from the site along with everyone else. - A clear evacuation exit should be available for the dog and not left in a locked room.	Headteacher
Not identifying the dog’s negative mood	Staff, pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	- The authorised dog must be accompanied at all times by a confident and able handler who is experienced to recognise the difference in dog moods. - If the dog is demonstrating negative moods, then the dog must be removed from the adults and children and put in a safe and familiar location to the dog so the dog can calm down.	Headteacher
Other dogs at the gate	Staff, pupils, dogs and other handlers	Low	Dog to remain on lead when at the gate	Headteacher

Handler		Signed	
Second named handler		Signed	
Head teacher		Signed	
Chair of Governors		Signed	
Date shared with staff			
Date of Review			