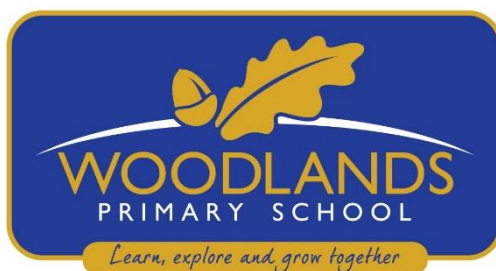


Woodlands Primary School

School Dog Policy – The Dog Mentor



Written by	Vicki Lonie
Ratified by Governors	Spring 2023
Date for Review	Spring 2026
Signed – Chair of Governors	
Signed – Headteacher	
Is this an internal or external policy?	External
Is this based on a model policy?	No

This policy has been impact assessed by Vicki Lonie in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

School Dog Policy – The Dog Mentor

Introduction

Children with companion animals have higher self-esteem, great empathy, more engagement with peers and other prosocial behaviour. Child-animal bonds promote healthy connections in the brain and help to strengthen intellectual, physical, emotional and creative processes. At Woodlands Primary School, our dog is owned by a staff member and is well-looked after. We feel the benefits to our pupils outweigh any possible risks. However, our risk assessment (appendix A) will be reviewed annually to ensure safety procedures are in place.

Rationale

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 absenteeism
- 8) Motivate children who are often less attentive

Education

Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect they have on children as well as the fact that a dog will listen to children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence to read aloud. Through this, there is evidence to show an increase in reading levels, word recognition and a higher desire to read and write.

Social Development

A variety of anxiety problems can be addressed by the presence of a dog as it creates a calming influence helping to decrease blood pressure and stress responses. Children also become less self-conscious of themselves.

The ability to form and sustain relationships is natural for most children, but some find it difficult to acquire these skills for various reasons and need some help to acquire them. Working alongside a dog, children are able to grow in confidence because they bond with someone who is calm, affectionate and more importantly non-judgmental and non-critical. Children experience a positive impact both physically and mentally.

Children develop a sense of responsibility and guardianship for the dog during play sessions. Working with a dog provides them with the motivation for better self-control and confidence. Over time, children use the skills in other situations.

Working with a dog provides children with the opportunity to develop a unique experience whereby they can return empathy, learn to share and understand that they need to consider the needs of the dog before their own. Creating trust through a relationship with the dog, they develop the skills to help towards building better relationships with peers and adults.

It is accepted that interacting with animals is not appropriate for all children but for some it has the potential to provide many positive benefits. Any child not wanting to interact with the dog can tell us and interaction will never be forced. Parents must inform the office of any relevant allergies.

Roles and Responsibilities

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

The Head teacher 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.

Health and Safety

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 Head Teacher has been informed beforehand.

The dog has been chosen because he is known to be calm and good with children.

Staff, parents and children are informed that the dog will be in school and are provided with the policy and risk assessment.

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 is a dog in school.

The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control of a trained Dog Mentor handler.

The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedures.

Conduct Around the Dogs

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 a dog and should always approach from a crouched position.
- 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 not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke dogs on their body, chest, back and not by the face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Children should not shout, using calm voices at all times.
- Children who are feeling angry will not be invited to see the dog. Staff will support the child to use their breathing techniques and be allowed to return when they feel calm.

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, he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

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.

Care

The dog is be owned by a member of staff, who maintains responsibility for the dog, including medical care, food and a home outside of school hours.

The dogs resides in the office of the Pastoral Support Officer and the Key Stage 2 office to provide a calm, safe environment and some 'down time'.

If the dog is ill, it will not be allowed into school.

Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately with an appropriate scoop and wearing of gloves and disposed of appropriately.

Appendix A The Dog Mentor Risk Register
Organisation: Woodlands Primary School
Last Updated: 13-01-2023

Risk ID	Description	Impact	Owner	Impact	Probability	Risk Rating (Value)	Mitigation Plan	Adj Impact	Adj Probability	Adj Risk Rating	Contingency Plan	Status
Risk No	Risk written in terms of the issue that could occur	Impact on the school, pupil, handler or dog	select Low, Medium or high	select unlikely, likely, highly likely or certain	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What can be done to prevent the risk being realised	Impact on Risk following mitigation activities	Probability of issue occurring following mitigation activities	Green < 0.25 < Amber < 0.60 < Red	What could be done to minimise the impact if the risk is realised	Commentary of dates, actions and progress to minimise and retire this risk	
1	Minor injury to pupil by dog (such as scratches)	Could require medical treatment (in school). Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely	Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupil on behaviour around dog. Limiting tricks performed for smaller pupils (high five, etc). Dog's claws trimmed. Dog on lead at all times	Low	Unlikely	Minor first aid	Mitigation actions are all in place		
2	Serious injury to pupil by dog (such as biting or mauling)	Would require medical treatment (in school or at hospital) after assessment. Could also impact pupil confidence.	Dog Handler	High	Unlikely	Dog supervised at all times. Educating pupil on behaviour around dog. Monitoring Dog's health and temperament at all times. Dog on lead at all times.	High	Unlikely	First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are all in place		
3	Other injuries	Trips, slips or falls not directly related to dog.	Dog Handler	Low	Likely	Children supervised at all times. Dog trained to not pull while on walking on lead.	Low	Unlikely	First aid after in school or in hospital after assessment by first aider	Mitigation actions are all in place		
4	Allergic Reaction	Allergic reaction to dog	Dog Handler / Head of School	High	Likely	Parents have notified school of allergies. Pupils with severe allergies to not work directly with dog All pupils to follow hygiene controls to minimise risk of affecting other pupils Seek medical advice on pupils who may experience serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) as pupil's status becomes clear to school to enable additional controls to be put in place	High	Unlikely	If dog comes into contact with pupil who has allergy, remove pupil from environment and seek medical advice if symptoms arise	Mitigation actions are all in place		
5	Illness transferred from dog to pupil	Pupil could become unwell after infection requiring treatment and/or time off school. Examples are worms, rabies, fleas, etc	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely	Dog to be inoculated against all recommended diseases as per recommended schedule. Worm and flea treatment to be carried out by handler regularly.	Medium	Unlikely	Dog has up to date medical history from vets. Flea and worm treatment carried out monthly.	Mitigation actions are all in place		
6	Dog excrement	Hygiene issues within school. In extreme cases, faeces can cause a disease which can cause blindness.	Dog Handler	High	Likely	Dog to be removed from indoor environment. Taken to appropriate location. Faeces removed from school grounds.	High	Unlikely	Appropriate action to completely clean area, all waste disposed of in correct manner	Mitigation actions are all in place		
7	General Hygiene	Germs could be spread between dogs and humans.	Dog Handler / Head of School	Low	Highly likely	All staff and pupils to wash hands after coming into contact with dog. Keep dog away from all food preparation areas and away from pupils during times when they are eating.	Low	Unlikely	No contingency plan	Handler to request that handwashing is put in place or introduction of some other method such as alcohol gel or wipes.		
8	Impacts on Dog from other animals	If other animals such as dogs, cats or foxes are around in the school grounds, the dog could	Dog Handler	Medium	Unlikely	Dog to be kept under control at all times. Handler to be aware of	Low	Unlikely	Dog training and control is required to reduce impact and	Mitigation actions are all in place		

		be attacked or chased which could adversely impact both the dog and/or pupils and staff.				environment at all times			likelihood of occurrence			
9	Minor injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely	Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside.	Low	Unlikely	Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid may be required	Mitigation actions are all in place		
10	Major injury to dog	Intentional injury to dog by pupil who is showing uncontrollable or unreasonable behaviour. This could also result in injury to pupil if dog reacts adversely. Environmental risks exist where dog could get injured (e.g. open stairways, heavy doors or gates or roads near to school).	Dog Handler / Head of School	High	Unlikely	Handler to be aware of situation at all times. Pupil's temperament to be monitored. Pupils showing unacceptable behaviour will not be allowed to work with dog. On open stairways, dog to be walked on wall side. Handler to always follow training methods on movement around school. The dog should be kept on a lead while inside and outside.	High	Unlikely	Handler to intervene if risk is realised. Pupil or dog to be removed from environment. First aid to be administered and then taken to vet.	Mitigation actions are all in place		
11	General welfare of dog	If overworked, dog could become tired and may display unwanted behaviour or become ill.	Dog Handler	Medium	Likely	Handler to be aware of dog's characteristics. Provide dog with regular breaks and access to water. Limit the number of pupils working with dog at one time to reduce chance of dog being overwhelmed.	Medium	Unlikely	Extended rest period for dog	Mitigation actions are all in place		