



The Governing Body of

**Herons Dale Primary
School**

have adopted the following policy:

Dogs in School Policy

Reviewed by: Tracy Vise

Date: June 2022

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Hérons Dale believe that opportunities to work with animals provide unique opportunities for learning. We recognize our responsibility to provide a safe environment and positive learning experiences for all pupils and a high standard of care and welfare to all animals involved. This policy sets out how this will be achieved. It has been written with reference to the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and our existing school policies.

Hérons Dale School Aims

Hérons Dale School aims to provide its pupils with:

Happy days filled with learning

Pleasure and stimulation from being around animals can impact a child's emotional state.

Experiences which develop a fit and healthy lifestyle

Looking after animals requires fine and gross motor skills which will be further enhanced as children are given the opportunity to rehearse new skills.

Relevant, broad, balanced, creative and inclusive curriculums

Hérons Dale teachers use a range of curriculums and ideas to ensure our curriculums are relevant, broad and balanced for our children.

Opportunities to be part of the community

As a community school, Herons Dale is alert to opportunities to develop links within the locality and seek to encourage people with special talents to work within the school.

Nurturing relationships

Hérons Dale are aware of the importance of relationships between children, their peers, staff, families and the wider community. Giving the children the opportunity to work with animals will help them forge different relationships.

Stimulating learning environments where pupils feel safe and secure

Hérons Dale provide a range of environments within the school ground which offer a range of differing opportunities.

Diverse and personalised approaches to learning

Staff work closely with pupils to ensure learning matches their needs in the broadest possible sense.

All-encompassing communication

Hérons Dale teachers are keen to make their children aware of the importance of functional communication by using a 'Total communication' approach to empower every pupil to be confident that their 'voice' is always heard

Life skills development

We always strive to ensure that pupils are able to generalise the skills they have learnt, at a pace which supports the development of confidence, in order to help prepare them for their future

Encouragement and support to have respect, confidence and resilience

Modelling of specific praise and support encourages our children to be able to encourage, support and respect each other whilst developing their confidence and resilience to new situations/experiences and new skills learnt.

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, many 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 Head teacher Isabel Robson. 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 dogs are owned by Isabel Robson and Teresa O'Connell.

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dogs.
- Only the school dogs allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head teachers has given prior permission.
- Herons Dale has two school dogs. Kirby, a Border Terrier, lives with Isabel and her family. Kirby is very curious and likes to smell everything and everyone. Frida visits occasionally and is a Tibetan Terrier, lives with Teresa and her family. Frida is very happy and enjoys meeting people.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been produced 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 a dog is ill it will not be allowed into school.
- The dogs 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 will not be left alone with the dogs and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times. • Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs. Children should remain calm around the dogs.
- 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 they are sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.
- If the dogs are surrounded by a large number of children, they could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dogs must ensure that they monitors the situation.
- Children should not eat close to the dogs.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling dogs.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dogs via an opt out agreement.
- All visitors will be informed about the dogs 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 dog. This includes Isabel Robson.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Isabel Robson, Teresa O'Connell or other staff members as delegated by Isabel or Teresa.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dogs, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Deputy Head or Head Teacher.

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 dogs. 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.

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. 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 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.

Kirby will visit classrooms to interact with the children in a way that is meaningful for them. These visits will be in consultation with the class teacher and will be on a rota basis.

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 Kirby is Isabel Robson, and the legal owner of Frida is Teresa O'Connell; they will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and staff training costs where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder? Yes. Kirby a Border Terrier, and Frida a Tibetan Terrier, came from homes where the mother was seen and the father was KC registered, they were specifically chosen for their temperament and are hypoallergenic.

Q Will the dog be a distraction? Kirby will be kept in the heads office area and Frida will be kept in an office with an adult. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure they only come into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision. The dogs may also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand. At other times both dogs may be in an office with clerical members of staff.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken? Yes, we have carefully considered having dogs 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? Isabel Robson and Teresa O'Connell will be the legal owner of the dogs and as a result, will be responsible for their training.

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. 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 dog 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 dogs will have unlimited access to food and water. We will

work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered. Please also refer to our Animal Welfare Policy.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies? A letter will be signed by all parents/carers asking for information on known allergies. Children 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 children 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. Staff will remain vigilant for any new or different reactions.

Q My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this? A letter will be signed by all parents/carers asking for information about any known issues around dogs. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with Kirby and Frida. 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. Staff will remain vigilant to fears and anxieties in children.