

Vigo Primary School



Dog Policy

This policy has been adopted by the Governing Body in September 2024 and will be reviewed in September 2027.

Signed: *Marty Johnson* (CoG)

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

School Policy

- The dog will be under the care of Mrs Parry, Mrs Dance, Mrs Mallon, Miss Phillips or Mrs Matthews (Nurture Team) during school hours.
- Only a trained 'school dog' is allowed on the premises. All other untrained dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Head Teacher has been informed beforehand. On these occasions the owner will take full liability for the dog.
- The dog's are a golden retriever and red fox labrador, chosen because they are both an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children and is very sociable and friendly. The dogs have come from a reputable breeder and full breeding history and welfare has been obtained.
- The Chair of Governors, Marty Johnson and the governing board agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Vigo Primary School.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment for dogs in school 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 and a list of pupils and staff this effects will be kept in school. All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill they will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will have regular flea and worm treatments as per veterinary guidelines.
- The dog will be inoculated annually including optional jabs that add further protection, such as Kennel Cough. Mrs Parry and Mrs Dance will be responsible for this and will provide inoculation certificates to the school.
- If the dog sustains an injury at school Mrs Parry or Mrs Dance is liable for the treatment costs associated with the injury unless the injury is a result of School negligence. If the dog's owner claims the school is negligent then an investigation will be undertaken and reviewed by the Governing Body. In all incidents the school will not cover the insurance excess.
- 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.
- The dog will only partake in sessions within a group or class for no longer than 30 minutes at a time. For a 1:1 session, this can be extended up to an hour.

- Children should be taught and 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 it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children should not and must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Everyone must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking the dog.
- 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.
- 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 the dog should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.
- Children will and should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in supervision of the dog.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog depending on the children's needs and the dog's development.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The school/office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times. The dog will have a timetable/schedule as much as possible.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation and lock down procedures under the supervision of Mrs Parry, Mrs Dance or the adult the dog is with.
- The dog will have its own dedicated space in school (outside and inside). Where the dog can relax. There will be everything the dog will need in these spaces. Bed/water bowl/toys etc... to ensure the welfare of the dog at all times.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Head Teacher or a Deputy as soon as possible.

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.

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 truancy
- 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 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-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging 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.