



ANIMALS IN SCHOOL POLICY INCLUDING SCHOOL DOG POLICY

Date of last review October 2023

Review period 4 Years

Date of next review November 2027

Committee School Improvement

Policy type Non-statutory

Jesus said, 'I am the Good Shepherd... I know my sheep and my sheep know me.' John 10.14

Our school vision

We are inspired to be a vibrant, joyful community in which we know and love one another, leading together and growing together by:

- Appreciating everyone and everything around us
- Making one another feel safe
- Sharing, so no one feels left out
- Living well together in love
- Moving forward together in hope

Animals In School

Introduction

A variety of animals, including dogs, are becoming an ever-popular and worthwhile addition to schools across the country. Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with animals, particularly dogs. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. We value the development of children's well-being along with their spiritual, moral and social education as highly as we value academia. We believe having a dog in school is a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills and well-being.

However, there should be a clear purpose for an animal to visit the school and, in line with RSPCA guidance, the school does not support the keeping of pets on the school site.

It is the school's intention to notify parents/carers that animals may be introduced into the classroom and the school is particularly keen to support visits from service animals such as hearing dogs, this reflects the school's ethos of celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion.

NB: the term 'animal' includes birds, fish and reptiles for the purposes of this policy

Procedures

Animals brought to school for long, short term or day visits

Parents must be advised that animals may be present in school and that they should advise the school of any allergies or fears their children may have.

Before bringing an animal onto school premises during school hours prior permission must be obtained from the Headteacher. Arrangements for animal visits should be made at least 48 hours in advance to ensure that, if appropriate, parents are notified.

Those responsible for the animals must ensure that they are in good health and have had all the necessary immunisations or vaccinations. Any animal brought to school must remain under the control of a responsible adult at all times. The animal should be restrained on a lead, or in a

suitable carrier, when moving around the school for safety reasons. This applies at all times when the animal is on school premises. Transportation of the animals to and from school remains the responsibility of the adult in charge of the animal. No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to the building or on to school grounds by anyone other than an authorised or licensed animal handler.

There will be no physical contact between the animal and pupils unless it is an integral part of the learning and with prior approval of the Headteacher.

Should any pupil or adult be harmed (scratched or bitten) by an animal at school first aid must be administered and, in the case of a pupil, parents will be advised. An incident report will be kept of any such occurrence.

Animals will not be allowed to enter the school kitchen or go into the hall during meal times. Children should always wash their hands after handling an animal. Any excrement will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult. If any 'accidents' occur in areas which children have access to, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site.

Children with Medical Concerns

Health issues will be considered when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the classroom and prior to the consideration of the introduction of an animal to a classroom the class teacher should review the medical notes of the pupils in their class to ensure there will be no conflict.

It is the policy of the school to consider the safety, health and well-being of every pupil when making decisions regarding the introduction of animals to the classroom. When there is a conflict in this area the Headteacher will liaise with the staff member to find a solution to the matter in consultation with others e.g. the parents and pupil. If pupils pet an animal they will wash their hands after the activity.

The Care and Humane Treatment of Animals

Animals on school premises will be handled, treated and cared for in a humane manner at all times. Enclosures must be appropriate to the animal and it is the responsibility of the person in charge of the animal to ensure that it has sufficient food, water and a comfortable environment to reduce any stress that may be incurred by the animal. Habitats must be maintained and cleaned in accordance with good practice.

Guidance on Bringing Dogs into School

It is recognised that children can benefit both educationally and emotionally by inter-acting with dogs and empathy and nurturing skills can be developed through contact with dogs and other animals. Dogs are one of the most popular pets so it is likely children will already have some experience of inter-acting with them.

There is nonetheless a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment and it is the responsibility of the owner/carer of the animal to ensure that the animal's temperament is appropriate to an environment where there are children and others that are unknown to the animal. Suitable arrangements must be in place prior to any dog being brought into school; these will include:

- the agreement of the Headteacher
- an investigation of any allergies or fears children may have
- Consideration should be given to the temperament and characteristics of the breed of dog being brought in, including the size of the dog and its age.
- Dogs that are unwell should not be brought into school and bitches that still have puppies must not be brought into school due to the risk of the mother being overprotective and thus acting out of character and also due to the risk to the puppies of infection.
- Visiting dogs should be kept on a lead at all times and under the control and supervision of their owner; consideration must be given to the appropriateness of this in the case of a 'school dog'.
- Children should never be left alone with dogs, there must be an appropriate adult supervising at all times
- Pupils must be reminded of appropriate behaviour around dogs prior to visits
- Dogs displaying signs of distress in the presence of pupils should be removed from the environment immediately
- Pupils should not eat close to a dog
- Pupils should always wash their hands after handling/petting a dog

Parents/Carers Bringing Dogs onto School Grounds

Parents/Carers are not allowed to bring a dog onto the school grounds.

Stray Dogs on School Premises/Grounds

If there is a stray dog on the school grounds that cannot be identified the Headteacher or a member of the school staff will contact the local Dog Warden and ask that the animal be removed.

Roles and Responsibilities

The owner or handler of any animal, including a service animal, is responsible for the animal at all times and must take responsibility in the event of any harm, accidental or otherwise, that befalls a child.

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for animals in school and will review this every 4 years, or earlier if deemed necessary. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to the Deputy Head. Teachers and staff are required to abide by this policy. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

School Dogs

1. Introduction

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. Bayford CofE Primary School and Nursery has introduced the use of well-being dogs into the emotional well-being provision at school. This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents, staff and visitors the reasons for having a school dog and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, visitors and the school dog. Although there is a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment, this can be mitigated against, with a robust risk assessment to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents, staff and visitors. (Appendix A - Risk Assessment).

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 interactions with a dog.

2. The Benefits of a School Dog

School dogs have been proven to help develop pupils' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and in the development of empathy and nurturing skills. At Bayford CofE Primary School and Nursery, we hope that a school dog(s) will be a beneficial addition to our therapeutic offer in addition to the interventions we already offer and help promote engagement for those children who have found it difficult to access therapies in the past.

Animal assisted interventions (also known as AAI's) can:

- Teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills
- Help individuals develop social skills

- Be soothing
- Improve a child's ability to pick up on social cues which are imperative to human relationships
- Dogs have been shown to support emotional regulation through the positive impact on the autonomic nervous system
- Show that children working with well-being dogs have experienced improved motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes.

Well-being dogs are being used to support children with their social and emotional learning needs, which can also aid literacy development.

Research into the effects of well-being dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Increase in school attendance.
- Improved confidence.
- Decreased pupil anxiety resulting in improvements in learning, such as increases in reading and writing levels.
- Improved motivation to learn.
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional positive interactions with a well-being dog.
- Helping children learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.
- Increase social skills and self-esteem.
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life.

Confidence Benefits

"If children are partnered with a dog to read to, for example, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the non-judgemental experience"

SEND Benefits

"Therapy Dogs and well-being dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment."

Therapy Dogs Nationwide (<https://tdn.org.uk/schools-2/>)

Mental Health and Wellbeing Benefits

Some mental health challenges and psychiatric disorders are known to respond well to therapy dogs. Patients diagnosed with a range of issues, such as depression, bi-polar disorder, Autism, ADHD, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and Alzheimer's disease, benefit from their interaction with therapy dogs and other companion animals.

Sometimes, emotional challenges are the result of physical health problems, and therapy dogs can help with those too. Research suggests that patients who are recovering from difficult surgery or a bad accident who participate in animal-assisted therapy may feel less pain. Studies have shown that such interactions can increase the mood-boosting hormone oxytocin and decrease the stress hormone cortisol.

Evidence shows that just by being near a dog when stressed can reduce anxiety. In a survey, 92% of Pupils said they felt more relaxed during teaching and learning time when there was a dog in the classroom. When children are more relaxed and less stressed, they're going to learn more.

Behaviour Benefits

Researchers report that Pupils 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 Pupils declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%. In a controlled study, Pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and Pupils also showed more confidence and responsibility.

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

Educational Benefits

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. 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, pupils find social support and peer interaction. Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils 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 pupils who read to dogs show an increase in reading levels, word recognition, a higher desire to read and write, and an increase in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills among the pupils they mix with.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Pupils can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils. With

a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the dog. This includes walking and grooming. Research reports that involving pupils in the daily care of a classroom dog is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

Pastoral Care

Dogs can work with pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils 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 pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

3. Responsibilities

Pupil Responsibilities

- Pupils whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend dog therapy sessions.
- Pupils should be careful to stroke the dog on its body, chest, back and not by its face or top of head.
- Pupils must always wash their hands before and after stroking and handling the dog.
- Pupils must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.
- Pupils are not allowed to approach or disturb the dog whilst it is sleeping or eating.
- Pupils are not allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Pupils are not allowed to eat during animal assisted therapy sessions.
- Pupils understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards the dog will result in a fixed term exclusion.

Staff Responsibilities

- Dr Foster or Mrs Welch will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.
- Dr Foster is responsible for ensuring the training and accreditation of the dogs.
- The well-being dogs will be kept in Dr Foster's office or with Mrs Welch in her classroom.
- Pupils must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Pupils will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction, during a session or visit.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. Photos of all pupils and staff with a reported allergy to dogs are posted in the staff room.

- 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 they monitor the situation. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of his ears, they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the staff member handling them.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately, double bagged and disposed of appropriately by the dog handling staff.
- If a dog is ill they will not be allowed into school. Dr Foster/Mrs Welch have responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for the dogs if they are not to be in school on a given day.
- Dr Foster will maintain records and collect evidence of impact of the school dog to better inform research into the benefits of animal assisted therapy at Bayford.

3. Principles

The Head Teacher and the Governors have agreed to the presence of well-being dogs at Bayford CofE Primary School and Nursery.

Staff, parents and pupils will be informed in writing that dogs will be in school.

The presence of a school dog will be made clear to visitors, via a sign, upon their arrival at the School Office.

Parents will need to sign a consent form in order for their children to be present during Animal Assisted Therapy.

Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. No other dogs are permitted. A risk assessment has been approved by the Head Teacher and Chair(s) of Governors. This will be reviewed annually.

The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Dr Foster/Mrs Welch or other trained staff members.

The dogs are also fully insured by the school.

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

A: The legal owner of the dogs will be Dr Foster/Mrs Welch and they will bear the costs associated with owning the dogs; the school budget will support insurance.

Q: Will the dog be from a reputable breeder?

A: Yes. The dog will be purchased from a reputable breeder and will be specifically chosen for its temperament.

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 dogs in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog.

Q: Who is responsible for training?

A: Dr Foster/Mrs Welch will be the legal owners of the dogs and as a result, will be responsible for its initial training.

Q: Will the dogs be a distraction?

A: The dogs will be kept in office areas or with Mrs Welch in class. We will be careful to ensure that time spent with the school dogs is shared among the children fairly. We will also ensure that children who are not involved in regular, direct contact with the dogs are still able to participate in a number of ways, should they wish to do so.

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

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, the dogs will be taken to an area of the school grounds that has no access to children during the school day. Therefore, there will be very little chance of the children coming into contact with faeces. The staff in charge of the dogs will ensure that this is cleared away appropriately, leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no dogs (other than school dogs) in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q: How will the dogs' welfare be considered?

A: The dogs will be walked regularly and given free time outside. When necessary, they will have their own space in Dr Foster's office or Mrs Sims' office where they will not be disturbed by children. They will have access to food and water and we will work carefully to ensure their welfare is always considered.

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

A: There are no 100% hypoallergenic dogs. However, a breed known for being less allergenic for people with dog allergies will be sought. Dander, which is attached to pet hair, is what causes most dog allergies in people, and these dog breeds have a non-shedding coat that produces less dander. Children will not need to touch the dog if parents do not want them to, 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. Any children with allergies to dogs will be built into the risk assessment as they are made known to the school.

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

A: Access to the dogs will be carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it if this has been expressed by parents. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to help 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. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix A – Risk Assessment

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Canine related diseases and parasites	Pupils & Staff ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs to have necessary and current vaccinations before coming into school. Vaccinations and other medical treatment is the responsibility of the owner. • Dogs to have regular veterinary checks • Dogs will be kept free of fleas & ticks where possible • Dogs will be bathed regularly • Dogs lives with owners when not in school 	All aspects of the dogs' care are the responsibility of its owner/handler. The dogs will be covered by the school's public liability insurance certificate while in school.	MF	Ongoing	
Dog excrement and urine	Pupils & Staff ill health, slips and falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs to be wormed on a regular basis • Any excrement or urine will be cleaned up immediately and thoroughly disposed of responsibly and hygienically. The area will be sprayed with disinfectant spray. 	When the dog is being walked, the adult will carry adequate poo bags and it is their responsibility to ensure the excrement is double bagged and disposed of responsibly.	Adults walking the dog	ongoing	
Hygiene/Infection	Pupils & Staff ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate provision for hand-washing, following contact with the dogs; children will be advised not to touch any part of their face with their hands before hands are thoroughly washed. • Children will be reminded to wash their hands after spending time with the dogs. • All wounds on exposed skin are suitably covered. • Feeding time and facility for dogs to eat to be planned in advance. 	None			

Animals in School Policy Including School Dog policy | 2023

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Bites, cuts and scratches	Pupils & Staff ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure dogs have had suitable training before introduction to children and had a temperament check. • There will be no unsupervised contact with children. • Dogs closely supervised, kept under control at all times during school day hours when moving around school. • Children will be assessed to be able to walk the dog on a lead under strict supervision. • When appropriate, the dogs will be on a lead during any staff meetings, or twilight sessions. • Control the environment to ensure dogs are not overwhelmed. <p>Pupils and staff will be made aware of the procedures of meeting and handling the dogs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always remain calm around the dogs • Don't make sudden movements • Don't stare into a dog's eyes as this could be interpreted as a threat. • Don't put your face near the dogs. • Always approach the dogs standing up. 	Ensure dog is insured.	MF	Before dog comes into school	

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating. Don't eat close to the dogs and never feed the dogs your food or other food/treats without permission. <p>First aid kit held in school office and classrooms. The owner will ensure the dogs are not abused or over petted to help avoid any incidents. If the dogs appear anxious or over-stimulated, they will be removed to a different environment, or the visiting session may be cut short.</p>				
Allergic reaction to dog	Pupils & Staff ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All parents/carers and members of the school community will be informed via the website, newsletters and letter home that there will be dogs on site and asked to inform the school if they or their child has an allergy to dogs or severe fear of dogs. Parents/carers of children chosen to regularly work with the dogs will be contacted individually. Owners will bring a dog blanket/bed to each session for the dogs to lay on. Areas where dogs visit will be kept well ventilated. 	<p>All allergy information will be collected before the dogs are working with any children. A relevant file will be kept in the school office.</p> <p>A notice will be displayed in the entrance.</p>	MF	Before dog comes to school	

Animals in School Policy Including School Dog policy

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First aid kit held in the main office and classrooms. Pupils known to be allergic to dogs will not be allowed access to the dogs. Those thought to be highly allergic to dogs will have a statement included in their care plan/class teachers and school office to be made aware of this information. Visitors to the school will be informed on arrival that there is a dog on the premises. 				
Pupils become distressed/anxious and create a stressful situation for other pupils and the dog.	<p>Pupils, Staff, Handler.</p> <p>A stressful situation for the dog may result in it behaving in an unpredictable way and snapping/biting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental permission obtained for pupils to participate. Pupils taught how to behave around dogs prior to visit. Manageable groups of pupils present. Supervising staff to be vigilant of pupils and aware of what steps to take if a pupil becomes distressed or anxious. Agreed actions in place to be taken if the dog begins to show distress/anxiety. 	Pupils have opportunity not to take part in the activity.			
Noise, Barking	Pupils & Staff Anxiety	<p>Dogs chosen are sociable and will not be left with children unsupervised at any time.</p> <p>If problems occur, dogs will be removed from the situation by the owner.</p>	Any problems to be reported immediately to the SLT.	All	Ongoing	

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Fire drill and evacuation	Dog left in the building in an emergency	<p>The owners will be responsible for safely leading the dogs from the building to a place of safety. Where possible, the dog's collar must be on to evacuate as this is the best way to keep him safe in a challenging situation.</p> <p>If a fire evacuation happens when owner is teaching or not with the dog, he will get back to the dog ASAP or arrange for someone to deputise for the day who is able to evacuate the dog safely in their absence.</p>	Dog to be taken out on lead.	MF	Ongoing	