



St Chad's CofE Nursery and Infant School

School Dog Policy

School Leader: K. Gilsean

Link Governor: C. Lightfoot

Policy Approved **Signed: C. Lightfoot** **Date: 09.10.23**

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Rational

There is an increasing body of research to support the benefit of a dog in school. In schools across the country, Reading Dogs are being used to help children develop fluency in reading and Therapy Dogs provide comfort and reassurance to children with anxiety and self-confidence issues.

Increasingly in schools, it is becoming recognised that children's emotional wellbeing is at the root of positive behaviour and success with socialising as well as in the classroom. A dog can support children who are anxious about school and could be the reason that they want to come in every morning. Children with trouble managing their behaviour could learn to care for the dog and the dog could be helpful in de-escalating anger. Reading dogs can help boost children's confidence and fluency.

Caring for an animal can help children to learn about responsibility and can help children to learn how to treat animals safely and with compassion. Dogs are great fun to have around and can bring a caring, family atmosphere to a school.

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, staff and visitors.

Background information about the dog

The new school dog will be replacing the school's former school dog, Rosie Posie.

The new school dog is owned by the school's Welfare Officer, Mrs Kay.

The dog is a male Beagle named Patch aged 5 years old. Beagles are a breed that are adaptable, affectionate and sociable. They respond well to training and are known to be good with children.

Outside of school, Patch lives full-time with Mrs Kay and her husband, Mr Kay. Patch has lived in the family home since being a puppy and has been brought up in a household with young children.

As Patch's legal owner, Mrs Kay has full responsibility for the welfare of the school dog and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

Consent

- Staff have been informed by letter that a dog. All staff have been asked to complete a questionnaire to notify the School Business Manager of any medical issues and/or personal matters in relation to having a school dog in their working environment e.g. allergy, dog phobia
- Parents are notified of the school dog during their induction meeting. Consent is obtained for their child to have contact with the dog. The school's Welfare Officer keeps a list of children where consent has not been granted from parents.
- All visitors are informed on arrival that there is a dog in school. If any visitor has a fear or is allergic then the office staff will ask that the dog is kept away from them throughout their visit.
- Staff, children and visitors known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. The School's Welfare Officer keeps a list of all children and staff with a reported allergy to dogs (dander).
- A risk assessment has been written and will be reviewed annually.

Caring for the school dog



- Patch will undertake transition visits to school so that he can become familiar with the school environment. Staff, visitors and children will be notified of these visits in advance.
- Children will begin meeting Patch in small groups so as not to overwhelm him. This will also enable children to become familiar with seeing a dog in school and encourage calm conduct around him.
- If the dog is poorly he will not be allowed in school.
- The dog will be under the supervision of a staff member at all times. Children must never be left alone with the dog.
- Patch will be kept in the Welfare Office when not interacting with children for nurture or reading sessions (these will predominantly take place in the Rainbow Room). He will have a designated dog bed and access to clean, fresh water. A stair gate has been installed in the office to help keep Patch safe.
- Patch must 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
- First Aiders will be aware of the treatment required if someone suffers a dog bite. If an individual is bitten and the skin is broken, it will be recommended that they are seen by a medical professional.
- Children will be taught how to care for Patch when he is in school so that his own personal needs are met e.g. how to stroke him, ensuring that he is given space and time to relax and sleep.
- 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. If the dog is displaying any warning signs such as growling or flattening of her ears, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment by the staff member handling him.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the staff member handling the dog.
- In the event of the school being evacuated following an alarm then the dog will accompany the adult who is supervising at the time and once outside will be passed on to Mrs Kay when appropriate.
- Patch will only stay in school on the days that Mrs Kay is present. If Mrs Kay has meetings off site then Patch will remain at home.
- 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.

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by the Headteacher.

Appropriate behaviour around the dog

Whenever the dog is with children, the adult supervising should ensure the following:

- Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children 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 the dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Children should never go near or disturb the dog whilst he is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not play roughly with the dog.
- The dog should not be stroked until she is sitting or lying down.
- The adult in charge of the dog must ensure she is not surrounded by a large number of people which may make her anxious and stressed.



- Children should not eat close to the dog.
- Children should be careful to stroke Patch on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- Children whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend Nurture and/or reading sessions with the dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog prior to eating.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately by a staff member and disposed of appropriately using the outside bins.
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog before any interaction during a Nurture session or visit.
- Children are taught to show respectful and kind behaviour to Patch at all times, as outlined in the school's Behaviour Policy.

Monitoring and review

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.



Appendix 1 - School Dog Frequently Asked Questions

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

The legal owner of the dog is Mrs Kay; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Will the dog be a distraction?

The dog will be kept in the Welfare Office and will only go to other parts of the school under the supervision of an adult.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school dog. A school dog was introduced to St Chad's in 2019.

Will my child pick up infections from the dog?

The dog is fully vaccinated, treated regularly for worms and fleas and will be kept away from the school if it is ill. Children will be required to wash their hands before eating if they have been handling the dog. If the dog leaves a mess in the grounds it will be cleared by an adult and the area disinfected if necessary. No child will be asked to pick up dog mess.

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

In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no dogs on the school premises 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.

How will the dog's welfare be considered?

The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. The dog will be kept in the Welfare Office and will only have supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time, including transition visits to school, and will have unlimited access to water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered. If he is showing signs of stress or anxiety he will be taken away from the situation and returned to Mrs Kay in the office.

How will this be managed where children have allergies?

Children will not need to touch the dog which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. If a child is allergic to dogs then the dog will be kept well away. The dog will be regularly groomed to minimise any hair left in the school when moulting. The school already manages children with allergies and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs.

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

Access to the dog will be carefully supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him unless they are happy to do so. We hope that seeing the dog over time and the non-threatening behaviour it exhibits, that a nervous child will gradually become more confident. 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.