



Oakfield Community Primary & Nursery School

School Dog Policy

2023-2025



Rationale

The value of pet 'therapy' is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of a companion animal can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment a happier, more enjoyable and less foreboding.

To minimise the risk to children in school, animals are not allowed on the school premises. The only exceptions to this rule are assistance animals (dogs for the blind etc), animals that have permanent residences on the school grounds, ie school dog, registered Pets as Therapy dogs visiting through their volunteer scheme and dogs visiting as part of the curriculum e.g. police dogs. When guide dogs and animals are permitted on the premises, the animal's owner and handler must ensure that the animal is not a nuisance and that it does not interfere with the school environment. If a parent or pupil object to the animal's presence, then arrangements will be made to ensure the animal is kept away from them.

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. By having a dog in school we want to encourage those children specifically who are vulnerable, or those who are less confident with learning to have a friendly audience and to look forward to a challenge. Having a dog in school can encourage reluctant children to come to school. The vast majority of dogs are gentle and loving, offering children opportunities to improve social development skills, unconditional acceptance and the chance to do something really well. For some children, a dog will be a special friend, helping them to build self-esteem, relax and have fun. For others, time spent with a dog will be a reward for excellent effort with a difficult challenge.

Criteria

In order for a dog to be classed as a school dog, the following criteria must be met:

- A member of staff will have met the parents of the dog
- The dog will be a breed which is suitable to interact with vulnerable children
- The dog will be appropriately trained and well behaved to have as a school dog
- The dog will be regularly monitored by the owner, in order to ensure that it retains the correct temperament for working with children
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It is a requirement that our school dog handler to maintain the following recommended guidelines to ensure risks are kept to a minimum:

- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or illness
- Animals that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed onto the school premises until their health is restored
- All animals should have received relevant annual inoculations
- All animals should be wormed regularly every four months
- All animals should receive flea treatment every month

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- Claws should be kept trimmed to reduce risk of scratches
- All animals should be exercised before being allowed to work with children

Further to this, our school dog handler has the responsibility to ensure that:

- The dog is physically fit before visiting the school environment
- The dog is kept on a lead in the school grounds
- An adult remains with the dog at all times
- The dog is discouraged from jumping, scratching and licking
- The dog is of an acceptable hygienic standard ie not wet and muddy etc
- Natural relief for dogs is offered prior to visiting and at regular intervals during the school day, in the designated area, away from children
- The dog is insured with Public Liability Insurance

Headteacher: Mrs J Makin Signed:  Date: 3.12.22

Chair of Governors: Mr E Burke Signed:  Date: 3.12.22