

School Dog Policy

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. The school dog has undergone (at 7 weeks old) a Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test. (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0236271>) to help identify the dog with the correct behaviours and temperament for a school environment.

School Policy

- The dog will be owned by Mr Schrimshaw.
- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to the dog.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has given prior permission.
- The dog is a Wirehaired Pointing Griffon chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, which is hypoallergenic (sheds little hair) and is very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. Mr Redgrave, Headteacher, and Mr Schrimshaw, have produced a risk assessment 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 the dog is ill he will not be allowed into school.
- 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 an adult.
- Children will not be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. Children should remain calm around the dog.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with 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.
- Children should not eat close to the dog.

- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their children access to the dog via an opt out agreement.
- All visitors will be informed about the dog and related protocols on arrival and office staff will relay visitor issues to the relevant staff.
- Staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising will be known at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mr Schrimshaw or Miss Thomas- Garnett
- In time, the dog will undergo assessment to identify its suitability as a therapy dog. All training will be paid for by the school.
- Mr Schrimshaw will be responsible for the costs of insurance and the wellbeing of the dog.

What are the benefits of a school dog?

Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of therapy dogs in schools. Therapy dogs have been working in schools for the past 5 years across the UK. However, they have been commonplace in schools in the USA and Australia for many years. Evidence indicates that benefits include:

- Cognitive – companionship with a dog stimulates memory, problem-solving and game-playing. Encouraging expression, participation and shared attention.
- Social – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing and focused interaction with others. Encouraging respect and thereby improving pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600>
- Emotional – a school dog improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety. Improved behaviour, attendance and concentration, reduced stress and improved self-esteem
- Physical – interaction with a furry friend reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, gives motivation to move and stimulates the senses
- Environmental – a dog in a school increases the sense of a family environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- Helping children build confidence in reading – <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/feb/28/dogs-listen-to-children-reading>

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence, as well as increasing student understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills. At Ysgol Esgob Morgan we have a school dog to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students. Esgob Morgan's school dog will be a wellbeing dog with the aim that the dog will be trained as a therapy dog and certified by Therapy Dog Training UK. <https://therapydogtraininguk-s-school-bc46.thinkific.com/>

School dog timetable

- A timetable and appropriate activities will be developed termly, in line with the dogs age, training and temperament.
- The wellbeing of the dog will be at the forefront of any working plans.
- No food should be eaten during sessions with the school dog.
- An adult should supervise any sessions.
- Only pupils with permission should take part in sessions with the dog.

The School Dog

(pictures, welcome sign for reception)

Risk Assessment

School Dog Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – to publish to parents

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

A The legal owner of the dog will be Mr Schrimshaw. He will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance and staff training costs only where appropriate.

Q Is the dog from a reputable breeder? A Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for its temperament. The dog is a pedigree and is kennel certified

Q Will the dog be a distraction to students' learning? A The dog will be kept in the Jungle Room/Office area. The dogs time will be timetabled inline with the dogs age, temperament and up to date training. The dog will be supervised in all sessions. The dog will not be a distraction in lesson

times. The dog will also attend meetings with staff to support further socialisation, following consultation with staff beforehand.

Q Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A 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.

Q Who is responsible for training? A Mr Schrimshaw will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school dog in dog training. The school will have the dog assessed and certified as a therapy dog by Therapy Dogs Uk as soon as possible. (when the dog is 18 months old)

Q How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all? A In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog, where possible, will be toileted when taken out for short walks outside the school by staff members. The dog will be toileted in its own fenced off area during school hours if needed.

Q What if my child is scared of dogs? Will they be forced to be in the same room as the dog?

A The dog will be kept in the jungle room/office area. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area which will ensure the school dog only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision of a member of staff. Therefore a student will not be forced to be in contact with dog at any time against their wishes. 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.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. 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 that time. This will also be used as a behaviour reward. The dog will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have appropriate access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A Children will not need to touch the dog or be in the same room as the dog at any point 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. The school dog was specifically chosen for being a breed known for sociable dispositions and minimal moulting, he will be given a high quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

Advice on School Dogs

The Dogs Trust – School Dogs <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/factsheets-downloads/school%20dogs.pdf>

The Kennel Club – Bark and Read <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread> BBC News – “Every school ‘needs dog as stress-buster’”

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47655600>