



APPROVED BY GOVERNORS 11 MARCH 2025

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED WHEN REQUIRED

MOULSHAM INFANT SCHOOL

DOG POLICY

Introduction

Moulsham Infant School has enjoyed having a dog in school for several years. Recently, our school dog has changed and therefore this policy has been reviewed to reflect this.

At Moulsham Infant School, we are aware that 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. There have been numerous research projects undertaken and media promotion around the positive impact a school dog can have. A selection of these can be found online at:-

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

<https://www.itv.com/news/central/2019-01-22/the-school-dog-helping-students-with-mental-health/>

<https://www.tts-group.co.uk/blog/2018/01/16/dog-school-barking-mad-paws-thought.html>

Potential Risk

There is a slight risk to having a dog on school premises. However 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 trained, accompanied dog. Therefore, a school dog can be seen as just another risk that needs to be managed. Moulsham Infant School take the safety of our staff, pupils and visitors seriously, therefore we have taken measures to ensure the safety of all is a priority.

School Dog Policy

Previous/on-going arrangements

- At Moulsham infant School, all staff and governors have agreed that the school can have a dog.
- Previously, staff and pupils have been consulted through a questionnaire about whether to have a dog in school. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Parents were informed by letter that a dog will be in school.
- At the start of each academic year, the pupils receive a lesson/assembly introducing the dog. Parents have the opportunity to inform the school if their child is allergic to dogs or is dog phobic (frightened/fearful) and will be given the option to avoid all contact between their child and 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 been informed beforehand.

Our School Dog

- Our school dog is called Bonnie and she is owned by Mrs Claire Palmer.
- Bonnie is an Australian Labradoodle, a breed that is well suited to being a school dog due to their intelligence, love of children and non-shedding, hypoallergenic coat. Bonnie was purchased in 2020 as a puppy with the aim of becoming a trained, school dog at the previous school where Mrs Palmer worked. Bonnie has attended school with Mrs Palmer since she was 5 months old.
- Bonnie is a well-trained, extremely calm dog. However, it is known that if a dog is surrounded by a large number of children, it could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of Bonnie must ensure they monitor the situation and take care to avoid this happening.
- The senior staff will know the whereabouts of Bonnie and which staff are supervising her at all times.
- Bonnie will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Landa-Arrese or Mrs Palmer.
- We have produced a risk assessment, and this will be reviewed annually.
- Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs (animals) must remain at a manageable distance. Parents are able to inform the school of any animal allergies on admission and their class teachers will ensure Mrs Landa-Arrese and Mrs Palmer are aware.
- If Bonnie is ill, she will not come to school.
- Bonnie will be on a lead and will be supervised when moving around the school or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- There may be occasions where Bonnie is working off lead but this will only happen in an enclosed space and under the control of an adult (primarily Mrs Landa-Arrese or Mrs Palmer). Before removing the dog from the lead all those present will be consulted.
- Children must never be left alone with Bonnie and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when she is present with children.

General Guidance for Good Practice with Dogs

- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around dogs. Children should remain calm, they should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dogs 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 a dog when it is sleeping or eating.

- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with a dog.
- Children must not pull or touch a dog's tail.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring 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 a dog is displaying any of these warning signs they should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not feed or eat close to a dog.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

Roles and Responsibilities

The School has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in School.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The Headteacher may delegate this responsibility to the adult who is caring for the dog at any given time.

Teacher, staff and children 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.

Actions

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

Policy written: March 2021

Approved by staff: March 2021

Approved by governors: 18th March 2021

Reviewed: January 2025 (change of dog and staff).

Review date: When required

Appendix 1

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:-

- Improved academic achievement.
- Increased literacy skills.
- Calming behaviours.
- Increase social skills and self-esteem.
- Increased confidence.
- Teach responsibility and respect to all life.
- Help prevent truancy.
- 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 towards 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 a classroom dog 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-to-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.

Appendix 2

School Dog: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

A. The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Claire Palmer; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support insurance and equipment costs where appropriate.

Q. Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A. Yes. Great care was taken to find a reputable breeder.

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. Mrs Claire Palmer is the legal owner of the dog and as result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training has been undertaken and will be reviewed as necessary.

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

A. In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog has an enclosed space, away from children, within the school grounds. Bonnie is trained to go to the toilet on command and has never been outside of her designated area.

Q. How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A. The dog will be walked regularly and given free downtime. The dog will need access to a water bowl at all times. 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, 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 dog is given high-quality food and regularly groomed to help further reduce any possibility of allergens.

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

A. Access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it. 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.