



## *Manifold Church of England Academy*

### **School Dog Policy**

*Love Jesus, Love Others, Love Learning, Love Life*

#### **Purpose**

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog, as outlined below. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Animals in school have been shown to reduce anxiety in some children who find school challenging. Researchers report that students can identify with and feel grounded by animals and that having a dog in school can promote further positive behaviour, including students showing more confidence and responsibility. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students find social support and peer interaction.

Reading programmes with dogs have been shown to be highly beneficial for some students. Children who may be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are more likely to read to a dog - a dog won't judge or correct. Dogs are happy to have students read to them and they give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial for struggling, emerging readers. Research has shown 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. Our dog will therefore be used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. By having a 'Reading Dog' we want to encourage those children who are vulnerable, or those less confident at reading to have a friendly audience and look forward to reading as a treat.

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 students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Our school dog will also offer students a reward. Those students / classes who have behaved incredibly well during the week, 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 the dog. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake once the dog is fully trained.

#### **Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?**

Bringing a dog into school is not without its risks, although 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.

This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

#### **Managing Risks**

- Staff have been informed that the school will have a dog and have been trained in how to interact with him effectively. Staff who are concerned about having a dog in their classroom will not be allowed to do so on their own but instead will have an alternative adult in charge of handling the dog. Staff known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.

- Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school and have given consent for their child to interact with the dog. Parents have also informed the school if their child has any allergies or phobias related to dogs. Children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog.
- Children will be reminded regularly about the risks of having a dog in school and the correct behaviours that they must be demonstrating in order for them to be able to have contact with the dog. This will be carried out regularly during assemblies and before the dog interacts with the children each time.
- All supply staff will be advised that the school has a dog and asked regarding any allergies or phobias.
- Visitors will be asked on arrival if they would prefer not to have any contact with the school dog and if they have any allergies or phobias.

### **Context**

- Buster (the dog) is owned by Ackers
- Veterinary and any other costs are covered by Mrs Ackers (bedding, food, insurance, etc)
- He is fully insured
- Buster is a cockerpoo, chosen for his very mild temperament and non-moulting coat
- Mrs Ackers is in charge of his training and management in school

### **Management day-to-day**

#### **Buster will:**

- Not be allowed in school if he is unwell
- Have had all injections prior to joining Manifold Church of England Academy
- Be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk
- Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times
- Be fully trained to stay in a cage or in a bed in the office when required
- Have a base in the office when he is not in classrooms or in other areas of the school. If he is left alone in the office, the door will remain closed and a sign will be placed on the door to inform people that he is in the room
- He will be trained to go to the toilet in a designated area away from the children

#### **Pupils will:**

- NOT have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with Buster
  - Always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the dog
  - Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around Buster every time they meet him:
- o Always remain calm
  - o Be gentle
  - o Do not put your face near Buster's
  - o Do not disturb Buster if he is eating or sleeping
  - o Always approach Buster standing up
  - o Do not feed the dog
- Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry. 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 Buster is displaying any of these signs, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment

Head 2011 Pupils not abiding by the above do so at their own risk.

**Adults in charge will:**

- Always wash their hands or use alcohol gel after handling the dog
- Remind the children of what is appropriate behaviour around Buster every time they meet him (see list above)
- Learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry. 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 Buster is displaying any of these signs, he should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Clear up any foul (if this occurs) and dispose of this immediately
- Ensure that children with allergies or phobias or those without parental permission are not in contact with the dog

Adults not abiding by the above do so at their own risk.

**Should a bite occur (even playfully):**

1. Parents will be contacted immediately (if this is child related)
2. The wound will be cleaned and covered by a first aider
3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention
4. All staff will be informed
5. A full investigation will take place
6. The suitability of having a dog will be reassessed by the Headteacher

**Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school
- As with all policies in school, the Headteacher has the overall responsibility for ensuring they are implemented
- However, in practice, the responsibility for the implementation of this policy will be delegated to Mrs Ackers
- The person overseeing the dog at any given time is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the School Dog Policy are met.

Policy to be reviewed bianually

| Policy history               |                         |                    |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Approved                     | Details of changes made |                    |
| Signed by chair of governors | Amendments made yes/no  | Date<br>March 2018 |
| Signed by chair of governors | Amendments made yes/no  | Date<br>March 2018 |