



Dog Policy



Our School Vision:

We are God's children and global citizens. We will be bold enough to use our voices, brave enough to evoke change in the world and strong enough to stand up for what is right. We are valued and are part of a Christian family that grows together in faith, love and kindness.

'Let all that you do be done in love'. (1 Corinthians 16:14) Love of learning, life and living.

Associated values: Courage, Compassion, Forgiveness and Joy.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

This policy was reviewed and amended and staff were consulted on this document in:	July 2022
The policy was ratified by the Governing Body in:	July 2022

To be reviewed September 2023

This policy is designed to set out to pupils, parents and visitors the reasons for having school dogs at GEPS

Why we think dogs help children

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.

Research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. GEPS has school dogs who work with our children to improve wellbeing- both through helping them to feel more relaxed, provide some time away from peers to chat or play with the dogs or go for a walk and enjoy the benefits of exercise and fresh air.

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching children social skills and responsibility. Schools can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower children. With dogs in school, they have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. Researchers report that involving children in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The children also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of dogs at school.

Dogs are gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for children. Those 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, could be rewarded with spending time during the day to interact with these dogs. Walking, playing and training are some of the responsibilities pupils will be allowed to undertake. It has been proven that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Support Dogs can work with children on a one-one basis and will especially help those children who have been going through upsetting/difficult times. The dogs will bring much joy and help to all the children 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.

The benefit of having different school dogs is that, like people, they are good at different things. Nessie is a lovely dog to walk with. Dottie is a lovely dog to cuddle. Ted is a lovely dog to train or play with. Juno is a lovely dog to take to Forest School and chat to quietly. Mason is a lovely dog to sit on a sofa with and stroke. Mouse is a puppy so her strengths are still to be discovered!

The benefits of school dogs

School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence. There is also lots of research which shows that animal abuse and domestic abuse are strongly linked. By introducing children to school dogs and teaching them how to love and care for animals, we believe that we will teach the importance of empathy and kindness which children will carry through into their adult life. At GEPS we have school dogs to support our staff team in bringing all of these benefits to our students.

Reading

"Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect the dogs' presence has on children and the fact that the dog will listen to the children read without being judgemental or critical. This comforting environment helps to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading and provides them with the confidence needed to read aloud. When dogs are in a room of children trying to read they become less stressed, less self-conscious and more confident because dogs are non-judgemental. If children are partnered with a dog to read to, the dog provides comfort, encourages positive social behaviour, enhances self-esteem, motivates speech and inspires children to have fun and enjoy the experience of reading."

- Bark & Read - The Kennel Club

(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/barkandread>)

Well-being

The University of Buckingham vice-chancellor says it is "a powerfully cost-effective way of helping children feel more secure at schools".

Sir Anthony was speaking at a conference about the need to improve young people's sense of wellbeing. "The quickest and biggest hit that we can make to improve mental health in our schools and to make them feel safe for children, is to have at least one dog in every single school in the country," said Sir Anthony.

BBC News - "Every school 'needs dog as stress-buster'"

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

Domestic Abuse

An overwhelming majority of domestic abuse cases in the home also involve an animal being abused by the perpetrator, new research has found.

A study conducted by a charity aimed at rescuing animals and victims from domestic abuse has found that animals were also abused in 88% of cases surveyed. It also found that 1 in 10 cases involved an animal being killed as a means of intimidation.

The research, carried out by Refuge4Pets, surveyed 107 victims of domestic abuse, and interviewed victims from across the country to better understand the link between domestic abuse and animal abuse.

The study also found that in cases where a pet was given as a gift, abuse against the animal occurred in 94% of these households.

Freedom Project

The study, titled “Animal Abuse as a Strategy of Coercive Control” was carried out by Mary Wakeham, a former PhD student at the University of Bristol Centre for Gender and Violence Research, as well as service manager at Refuge4Pets.

The charity works alongside Dogs Trust’s “Freedom Project”, which is dedicated to rehoming the animals of abuse victims and is marking its 2,000th dog rescued under the initiative.

Amy Hyde, Freedom Project manager at Dogs Trust, said: “Unfortunately, this new research revealing further links between animal abuse and domestic abuse is not shocking to us. We see first-hand the myriad ways that perpetrators use dogs to coerce, control, physically harm and threaten within abusive relationships. This is incredibly frightening for survivors and is often aimed to leave people isolated.

“We have heard of perpetrators not letting survivors walk their dogs alone, stopping them from accessing vet care for their dogs or being able to spend money on dog food and even repeatedly threatening to harm, kill or get rid of their dogs.

“To instil fear and entrap, perpetrators prey on the strong bonds people have with their beloved pets.

“As many refuges are unable to accept pets, survivors are understandably concerned about their dog’s safety when they need to escape; the Freedom Project offers them a vital lifeline.”

<https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/courses/safeguarding/animal-welfare-course> This course is free of charge and provides a basic understanding of what animal abuse is, how to spot the signs, as well as to understand the recognised link between family abuse and animal abuse and understand what to do if you have suspicions of abuse.

Behaviour

Behaviour problems can occur in school and these can interfere with learning. We use dogs to improve behaviour problems by promoting positive behaviour and kindness in children. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Students’ behaviour improved toward 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.

Attendance

Children can be encouraged back into school using caring for a dog as an incentive.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, with a dog in the classroom, 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 classroom dogs 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 children. Those children 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, may be rewarded with spending time with the dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities children 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 children on a one to one basis and will especially help those children 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 the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Bullying and Aggression

Bullying can be a problem in all schools with students anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. 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 participation students declined by 55%, and general aggression went down 62%.

Is there a risk in bringing dogs into a school environment?

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 students, staff and visitors. 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, we believe 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.

Only dogs specifically authorised by the Headteacher are allowed on the school site. This includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

Our rules to keep children, staff and dogs safe in school

- ➡ The school dogs will be owned by teachers. This means that there will never be more than one dog associated with a class at any time. The owners are fully responsible for the welfare of the dogs e.g. keeping their vaccinations and worming tablets up-to-date
- ➡ The Governing Body have agreed that a school dog will benefit the children and staff of Great Easton Primary School.
- ➡ Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. Other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dogs and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand.
- ➡ Parents have been informed that we have dogs in school. All parents who have a tour of the school are shown and told about the dogs. There is also a risk assessment which will be reviewed annually.
- ➡ The staff who own the school dogs have a messaging group to communicate on a daily basis- all owners will know which dogs will be in school each day.
- ➡ Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. There is a sign to alert visitors to the fact that we have school dogs where visitors sign in.
- ➡ The dogs will normally be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will always be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- ➡ Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- ➡ At the start of each school year, the teaching staff who own the school dogs will run a whole school assembly to remind children about appropriate behaviour around the dog: remaining calm, showing the 'X- factor' if they do not want to be of interest to the dog, never stare at the dogs, hold a closed hand for sniffing before petting the dogs, not taking anything from a dog's mouth.
- ➡ Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- ➡ Children must not be allowed to play roughly with any dog.
- ➡ If a 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 they monitor the situation.

- ➡ 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 he should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- ➡ Children should not eat close to any dogs.
- ➡ Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.
- ➡ Parents will be consulted on allowing their pupils access to the dogs via the permission slips which they complete when their child joins the school.
- ➡ The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of their owner.

Actions

If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to 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. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors 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.

Dogs in School Risk Assessment June 2022

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Bites, scratches or illness caused by the dog	Staff, pupils and handlers	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All dogs that visit are vaccinated, wormed, and treated for fleas • Dogs are groomed regularly if applicable to their breed • All staff and pupils are required to wash their hands after contact with dogs • Handlers clear up dog urine and faeces promptly and dispose of this safely – pupils are told to stay away • Dogs are not taken anywhere near food preparation areas 	Kathryn, Stacey, Sam, Claire and Holly
Allergies	Staff and pupils	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We seek parental permission for children to interact with dogs • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with allergies 	Administration team and Kathryn, Stacey, Sam, Claire and Holly.
Phobias	Staff and pupils	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and children know about dogs in school • Contact with dogs is optional • Alternative activities are provided in a separate room for those with a phobia 	Kathryn, Stacey, Sam, Claire and Holly

HAZARD	WHO IS AFFECTED/AT RISK	RISK RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)	ACTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Activities and games involving the dog	Staff, pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A competent adult or the dog's owner remain with dogs at all times • We check with the owner and set a limit for the number of children who can interact with a dog at once • A competent adult or the dog's owner clean up urine and faeces • School staff do not allow children who misbehave or could potentially upset dogs to have contact with them • We set a time limit on activities as recommended by the owners, so dogs do not get tired 	Kathryn, Stacey, Sam, Claire and Holly
Children's behaviour	Pupils, dogs and handlers	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are taught how to behave around dogs in our annual assembly. They are also reminded at other times if necessary. • Children never have unsupervised contact with a dog 	Kathryn, Stacey, Sam, Claire and Holly
Damage caused to school materials, equipment and the school site	Dogs	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs are supervised at all times and not allowed to roam around the building • When not with a competent adult or the dog's owner, dogs are kept in secured areas, with closed doors 	Kathryn, Stacey, Sam, Claire and Holly