



# Castle Newnham School

TRADITIONAL VALUES, BRIGHT FUTURES, ONE JOURNEY

## School Dog Policy

Governors' Committee:	Curriculum & Standards Committee
Adopted by the Governing Body on:	December 2019
Signed: (Chair of Committee)	
Signed: (Federation Principal)	
Proposed date of review:	December 2022



## A. RATIONALE

This policy is a statement of the strategy that staff at Castle Newnham School will employ in order to use animal therapy, in specifically a dog, to support and improve the social and emotional welfare of pupils in school.

## B. AIM

During the course of the school week, the school will use the dog to work with individual pupils as well as larger groups in a variety of circumstances and situations. These will be planned sessions to support pupils who the school feels will benefit from working with the dog.

### B.1 PRINCIPLES

A growing amount of academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can have a positive impact on pupils. A more detailed overview of this research is found in Appendix 1, with the outline of the intended outcomes listed below:

- 1) Improve academic achievement
- 2) Increase literacy skills
- 3) Calm behaviour
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem
- 5) Increase confidence
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect for all living things
- 7) Help prevent truancy
- 8) Motivate pupils who are often less attentive.

A range of broad, frequently asked questions can be found in Appendix 2. These may answer initial questions that parents/carers may have, with regards to the use of a dog in school. Should parents/carers wish for further information, please contact Mr Nik Maund (Vice Principal – Pastoral) for further guidance.

## C. PROCESSES

- As per guidance, the dog is not owned by the school but by the person who has paid for the dog. The owner assumes overall responsibility for the behaviour and welfare of 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 Federation Principal has been informed beforehand and has approved this visit.



- The school dog is a Kennel Club Registered Labrador and has been chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children and is very sociable and friendly.
- Staff, parents and children will be informed by letter that a dog will be in school. A risk assessment has been completed to ensure that the school has considered aspects of risk.
- The dog will be insured to be on the school site and to work with children.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs will not be permitted to go near or work with 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 a trained adult.
- Parents will be consulted on allowing their child access to the dog.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- The office will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising him at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the trained staff.
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Vice Principal as soon as possible so that appropriate action can be taken.

At all times, contact with the dog will be through a named / approved handler in school. Children will be taught to ask permission before approaching the dog, how to interact with the dog and how to stroke the dog:

- Pupils will not be left alone with the dog and there will be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog. And reminded of the need to remain calm around the dog.
- Children will not be allowed to go near or disturb the dog during sleep/rest periods.
- At all times, children will only ever approach or touch the dog under supervision.
- Children will be taught that dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing 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 the dog is displaying any of these warning signs he will be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- No food will be offered to the dog (other than by its handler)
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on his body, chest, back and not by his face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling the dog.
- There will be a designated area for the dog to relieve itself. Only adults will clear any associated mess. Soiled dog waste bags will be disposed of appropriately.



## D. MONITORING, ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Information to assist with the monitoring of the policy will be collected in the following ways:

- Pupil and parent feedback
- Staff feedback
- Attendance data
- Data recorded on SIMs related to achievement and behaviour incidents
- Records of exclusions
- External monitoring such as provided by the Local Authority, partner schools, Ofsted or other professional bodies.

This monitoring activity will allow us to evaluate the impact of the policy on pupil achievement. An overview of the impact of the school dog will be included in the Federation Principal's termly report to governors.

## E. APPENDIX 1 (Summary of research)

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 pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils. In a controlled study, pupils were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals in schools with a dog than schools without. Pupils' behaviour improved toward teachers, and pupils 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:**

Case study: Mandy was a pupil with poor attendance and truancy. Mandy was encouraged back into school using caring for River, a dog, as an incentive. By telling Mandy that "if she didn't come to school to care for him, he wouldn't get walks, water or love," Mandy came to school almost every day for the rest of the year, only missing two days.

### **Education:**

Reading programmes with dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even to 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," pupils find social support and peer interaction.

Dogs are incredibly calm and happy to have pupils 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 proven that pupils 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 their peers.

### **Social Development:**

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching pupils social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help older pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older pupils use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower pupils.

With a dog in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of classroom dogs, is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils 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 pupils. Those pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils on a one-one basis and will especially help those pupils 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 pupils they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the pupils they are spending time with. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

## **F. APPENDIX 2 (FAQ)**

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

A: The legal owner of the dog will be the person who has paid for the dog; they will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will support liability insurance for when the dog is in school.

### **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 already well socialised with children.

### **Q: Will the dog be a distraction?**



A: The dog will be kept in two areas of the school – The Pupil and Family Welfare Area whilst working and in the Vice Principal's office for rest periods. The office has a separate area that will be used for the dog and is separate from the classrooms / playground area. Access and use of the dog will be planned and supervised to avoid distractions.

**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 a reputable dog behaviourist.

**Q: Who is responsible for training?**

A: The legal owner of the dog and as a result will be responsible for its training. Appropriate adults will also be given training on safe handling of the dog.

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

A: In the interest of health and hygiene, our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks in the grounds behind the main office and away from children. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Our policy of no dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

**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. The dog will only have planned and supervised contact with pupils and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

**Q: How will this be managed where pupils have allergies?**

A: Pupils with allergies will not need to touch the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. If allergies are more severe, pupils will not be given access to the dog.

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

A: Any access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and pupils do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. 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 if they wish.