



Holy Trinity C of E Primary School

DOGS IN SCHOOL POLICY

	DATE
Policy reviewed	23rd March 2026
Next review due	23rd March 2027

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. Children who read to dogs are less likely to be embarrassed reading aloud and find the experience less stressful. Research has proved that children who read to dogs show an increase in reading ability, word recognition and a higher desire to read and write. Dogs are also useful when dealing with children's challenging behaviour, to either diffuse the situation or give a calming influence and something soothing to touch.

Research evidencing the positive impact of a dog is detailed in the links below.

<https://www.dogshelpingkids.co.uk/charity.php>

<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>

<https://www.elmtree.lancs.sch.uk/Leading%20Edge/our-school-dog>

Roles and Responsibility

It is the governor's responsibility to ensure that the school has a policy, and this is adhered to, parents have been informed and there is a risk assessment in place.

It is the Headteacher's responsibility, as the dog owner, to ensure Rolo is trained well and is aware of Rolo's well-being as well as children who might be nervous around dogs. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring the children and staff of the school are fully trained in the correct ways to approach and handle a dog. It is also the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure Rolo has adequate insurance.

It is the adult's responsibility that when Rolo is in their care they ensure the children and adults stick to the rules to reduce risk.

It is the children's responsibility to ensure their behaviour is appropriate and does not cause distress to Rolo.

About the dog

- The dog, Rolo, is a Westipoo
- Westipoos are kind natured, calm and nurturing dogs
- He is microchipped and fully up to date with all inoculations.

- Rolo belongs to Mrs Rowe
- Rolo is based in the SLT office.
- Rolo has been trained to become a wellbeing dog to ensure safe interaction with any children.

Health and Safety

Within the school environment there is the potential for a great number of accidents to happen and consequently we have a great number of risk assessments in place to mitigate against these. Having a dog on the premises is just another risk that needs to be thought about, assessed and have a clear procedure to manage and reduce the risk.

- A risk assessment has been written, implemented and then will be reviewed annually.
- The policy, risk assessment and record keeping of the paper work will be reported to governors to ensure that everything is as it should be.
- Parents have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school. At the start of each academic year, the pupils receive a lesson on Rolo. 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 Rolo
- 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 dogs or the Head Teacher has given permission beforehand.
- Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near to Rolo and a record of these people kept in the allergies proforma.
- All visitors, on arrival, will be informed there is a dog in school. The office staff will inform Mrs Rowe immediately if there is potentially a problem.
- If Rolo is ill he will not be allowed in the school.
- Rolo will be kept on a lead when moving around the school with controlled 'off lead' times.
- There may be occasions where Rolo is working off lead but this will only happen under the control of an adult (primarily Mrs Rowe). Before removing Rolo from the lead all those present will be consulted.
- Children should not feed or eat close to Rolo (Under strict supervision, children are allowed to treat Rolo's obedient behaviour. This does not have to involve a child placing a treat to Rolo's mouth. Instead, it can be a child placing a treat on the floor which Rolo can then enjoy once commanded).
- Children must never be left alone with Rolo and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times
- Anyone who strokes Rolo will be advised to wash their hands as soon as they are finished.
- Rolo will also be part of the fire evacuation procedure.
- Any dog foul will be picked up and disposed of correctly and immediately.

- Mrs Rowe and the SLT will ensure that Rolo's well-being is also considered and he is allowed time to be alone to relax.
- The senior staff will know the whereabouts of Rolo and which staff are supervising - at all times.

Behaviour

The children and adults will:

- be reminded of appropriate behaviour around Rolo before they interact with him,
- remain calm around Rolo,
- not make sudden movements around Rolo.
- not put their face near Rolo and should always approach him standing up.
- not be allowed to play roughly with him,
- must be patient and wait until Rolo is sitting or lying down or in the arms of Mrs Row before stroking him.
- Children should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.

Rolo's Behaviour:

- Dogs express their feelings through their body language.
- If Rolo is surrounded by a large number of children, he could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- When he is frightened, agitated or nervous he will display some of the following behaviours: flattened ears, tail lowered or between legs, hiding behind the owner or whining.
- If he is displaying any of these warning signs he will be removed from the situation or environment immediately.

Actions

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

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: -

- 1) Improved academic achievement.
- 2) Increased literacy skills.
- 3) Calming behaviours.
- 4) Increase social skills and self-esteem.
- 5) Increased confidence.
- 6) Teach responsibility and respect to all life.
- 7) Help prevent truancy.
- 8) 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 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.

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 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 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-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 for its costs?

A The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Rowe; she will bear the costs associated with owning the dog; the school budget will only support additional resources for the benefit of the children of Holy Trinity.

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.

Q Will the dog be a distraction?

A The dog will be kept in the SLT office. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact under strict supervision.

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 Mrs Rowe will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for its training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a school 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 into the front garden or off site for walks. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

Q How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A The dog will be walked regularly and given free downtime. The dog will be kept in the SLT office and 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 unlimited 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, 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 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.