



## **School Dogs Policy**

### **1) Introduction**

Students 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, students take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog and this promotes enjoyment of school as a whole.

This policy is designed to set out to students, parents and visitors the reasons for having school dogs at Sir Charles Parsons School (Section 2, The benefits of a school dog) and the rules and responsibilities to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the school dog (Sections 3 and 4, Information and principles and Code of Conduct).

Whilst as a school we appreciate that there is a risk associated with bringing a dog into school there are a variety of accidents, which can happen within the school environment which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents that might be caused by a dog being present. Therefore, the associated risks and concerns will be mitigated against via a robust risk assessment and regular review and liaison with staff, students and parents.

Other dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school site at any time unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher, this includes drop off and collection times. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow the school dog to be present.

### **2) Benefits of having a dog in school.**

In summary, academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:-

1. Increase literacy skills
2. Calming behaviours
3. Increase social skills and self-esteem
4. Increase confidence
5. Teach responsibility for and respect towards all living things
6. Help to improve attendance
7. Motivate students who are often less attentive
8. As a result of the above points increased academic success

Many of these elements mirror aspects of our aspirational pathways document and the desired outcomes for education that we promote for all students at Sir Charles Parsons School.

The following information has been taken from a range of sources to provide further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school:

#### **2.1 Literacy and education benefits**

“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>)

"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 levels, word recognition, and a higher desire to read and write."

- School Dog Policy – The White Horse Federation

(<https://www.ridgewayschool.com/downloads/default/TWHF-School-Dog-Policy-V2.pdf>)

"The study showed that the presence of the dog during sessions increased positive initiated interactions toward the teacher and the dog for all three participants". "Authors also noted that the rate of occurrence of negative interactions decreased with the intervention."

Social Effects of a Dog's Presence on Children with Disabilities

Esteves, S 2008

## 2.2 Well-being benefits

"Therapy Dogs Nationwide dogs have also shown to help with special needs and autistic children and adults by giving focus and providing a calming environment."

- School Dogs - Therapy Dogs Nationwide

(<http://www.tdn.org.uk/schools/>)

"Qualitative analysis of data indicated that the dog's placement in the classroom: Contributed to students' overall emotional stability -Improved students' attitudes toward schools -Facilitated students learning lessons in responsibility, respect, and empathy."

The value of a dog in a classroom of children with severe emotional disorders

Anderson, K 2006

## 2.3 Attendance & punctuality benefits

"Mandy was a student 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."

- Case Study – Hazel Oak School Dog Policy

(<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

## 2.4 Behaviour & rewards

"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.”

- Hazel Oak School Dog Policy  
(<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

"The group became socially more homogenous due to decreased behavioural extremes, such as aggressiveness and hyperactivity. Also, formerly withdrawn individuals became socially more interested" (147). It was concluded that the presence of a dog in a classroom could positively stimulate social cohesion in children while improving teaching conditions. Children seemed to assume responsibility for the dog by acting considerate and observing its needs.”

Behavioral effects of the presence of a dog in a classroom.  
Kotrschal, K 2003

## 2.5 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 use dogs to help 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.

- Hazel Oak School Dog Policy  
(<https://hazel-oak.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/School-Dog-Policy.pdf>)

## 2.6 As a motivator and positive experience for students as part of the PLP programme:

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who struggle with motivation towards learning and tasks can be positively encouraged to take part in activities such as walking, grooming, playing and training. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves students’ social skills and self-esteem. Support dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who have a range of social and emotional difficulties and those who struggle with social interactions with peers.

## 3) Information and principles for a school dog.

3.1 The Head teacher and Chair of Governors, with the members of the governing body, agree that a school dog will benefit the students and staff of Sir Charles Parsons School and will form a positive part of the curriculum and learning experiences for our students.

3.2 There will be two dogs able to attend the school site and be part of the learning day with students, they are Oscar (Black Labrador), owned by Claire Andrew and Archie (Golden Labrador), owned by Keith Browell

3.3 Both dogs are Labradors and have been chosen because of the intelligence of the breed, because they respond well to training and because they are known to be good with students, being very sociable and friendly. Both individual animals are from reputable breeders and have a positive

temperament. They have received suitable training and will have time for acclimatisation to allow them to feel comfortable and relaxed in the school environment before working with students.

3.4 Oscar's legal owner is Claire Andrew. Archie's legal owner is Keith Browell. Claire and Keith have full responsibility for the welfare of the school dogs and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food veterinary care and any other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated.

3.5 Claire Andrew and Keith Browell, will produced a risk assessment which has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and this will be reviewed annually.

3.6 The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Claire Andrew and Keith Browell or other trained staff members.

3.7 The school's liability insurance covers the school for risk related to a working dog on site. The school business manager has responsibility for ensuring this remains on the school's policy during Oscar and Archie's time working at Sir Charles Parsons School.

3.8 Staff, parents and students will be informed in writing that a dog will be in school.

3.9 Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to be present during sessions with either of the school dogs by contacting the school office.

3.10 The presence of a school dog will be sign posted to visitors at reception and on the school website. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the SLT as soon as possible.

3.11 If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to a member of the SLT as soon as possible. All concerns will be responded to by a member of the SLT.

3.12 Only staff familiar to the dogs and confident with managing them will have permission to handle either dog in student sessions.

3.13 The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dogs. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

3.14 In general, any indoor sessions involving either dog will take place in science lab 2.07 or lab 2.18 or the vocational room 3.33. All have minimal soft furnishings or floor coverings to prevent increased dirt or allergen build up and ease of cleaning.

#### **4) Code of conduct**

##### **4.1 Staff responsibilities**

4.1.1 Claire Andrew and Keith Browell will know the whereabouts of the dogs and which staff are supervising at all times.

4.1.2 If the dog is ill they will not be allowed into school. Claire Andrew and Keith Browell have responsibility for ensuring appropriate alternative care for Oscar and Archie if they are not able to be in the school on a given day.

4.1.3 Claire Andrew and Keith Browell are responsible for ensuring Oscar and Archie are suitably trained and able to comply with their training whilst in school.

4.1.4 The dogs must be kept on a short lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an identified member of staff.

4.1.5 If the dog is surrounded by a large number of students or their level of excitement is too great the dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation and removes the dog to a quieter space if necessary.

4.1.6 Staff, visitors and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. All visitors will be informed via signage on arrival that there is a dog in school. The identified members of staff will be aware of any member of the school staff or students that are allergic and will be informed by the office should any visitors indicate this is the case.

4.1.7 Students must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.

4.1.8 Staff working with the dogs will have an understanding that dogs express their feelings through their body language. The adults in charge of the dog will be made aware that 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 should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.

4.1.9 Regular toileting will happen off site or in a designated grassed area.

4.1.10 Any dog foul should be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by the identified staff only.

4.1.11 There will be no occasions when both dogs will be involved in a student session together, and they will not be asked to interact with students in the same part of the school building. Although they might on occasion be in the building at the same time in separate areas.

4.1.12 Staff will maintain records of anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog to better inform governors and stakeholders of the benefits of a school dog.

## 4.2 Student Responsibilities

4.2.1 Students whose parents have withdrawn consent are not allowed to attend sessions with the school dogs.

4.2.2 Students who are scared or anxious about working with the dogs or being in close proximity to them with have a range of supportive and positive options provided, they will be able to opt out of the session or will be allowed to leave the session as any point if needed.

4.2.3 Students will listen to information from the identified adults about working with Oscar and Archie and to the best of their ability ensure they follow the instructions and information given.

4.2.4 Students should be aware of what is appropriate behaviour around the dogs and will be reminded and supported by staff to maintain those behaviours. For example, students should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements or tease the dog. (The complete appropriate behaviours list will be shared with students and will include the key points below)

4.2.5 Students should be careful to stroke Oscar or Archie on their body, chest, back and not by their face or top of head.

4.2.6 Students are not allowed to approach Oscar or Archie or disturb them whilst they are sleeping or eating. An area in the science preparation room will be set aside to give both dogs a secure and quiet area to relax during the day. This may include the use of a dog crate to provide a secure den for the dogs.

4.2.7 Students will not be allowed to play roughly with the dogs.

4.2.8 Students must wait until the school dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking them.

4.2.9 Students are not allowed to eat during sessions with Oscar and Archie.

4.2.10 Students will not tease Oscar and Archie with treats or toys.

4.2.11 Students will not feed Oscar or Archie any treats/ food not provided by Claire Andrew or Keith Browell.

4.2.12 Students must always wash their hands after handling / stroking Oscar and Archie.

4.2.13 Students understand that any deliberate violence or threatening behaviour towards Oscar or Archie will result in them no longer being able to be a part of any sessions with either school dog.