



St Mary Redcliffe  
and Temple School

# Dogs in School Policy

Approved by	FGB	Date December 2025
Last reviewed on	New	
Next review due by	December 2026	

## 1. 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, many children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

It is very important to consider the risks in bringing a dog into a school environment, and whilst we acknowledge these risks, we consider that the number and variety of accidents that can happen within the school environment far exceeds the number of injuries or incidents likely to be caused by a dog when the circumstances of a dog being in school is carefully managed, as set out in this Policy.

A dog on site is a risk that needs to be managed. A thorough Risk Assessment (RA) will be carried out where applicable.

No dog will not be allowed anywhere on site at any time (including the period immediately before or after the school day, when students are being dropped off or collected) unless specifically authorised.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that we have a written policy for Dogs in School, and the Headteacher is responsible for implementing the Policy. All staff, students, parents/carers, and visitors are required to abide by this Policy.

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

## 3. Protocols

- The Governors have the right to refuse entry to any dog.
- The School Business Manager will review all Risk Assessments at the point of creation and then review these annually as applicable.
- Students will never be left alone with a dog and there will always be appropriate adult supervision.

### Communication

- Staff, parents/carers, and students will be informed as necessary by letter via email that a therapy, 'dog mentor', or a 'school' dog will be on site during school hours.
- Parents/carers will be consulted as necessary on whether they give their permission for their children to have access to any dog on site.
- Staff, visitors, and students known to have allergic reactions to dogs will be warned not to go near the dog while they are on site.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school and the related

protocols. Reception staff will relay visitor issues to the School Business Manager as soon as is reasonable if they occur.

### **Owners and their Responsibilities**

- A dog coming on to our site during school hours will be owned by a member of staff.
- No dog will be allowed on site unless they are a known therapy, assistance, 'dog mentor', or 'school' dog, and the Headteacher or School Business Manager has been informed.
- A dog will be allowed on site only if it is known for its intelligence, that it responds well to training, is known to be good with children, and is sociable and friendly. A short haired dog is more likely to be considered suitable, as they are less likely to trigger allergies.
- If the dog is ill, they will not be allowed in school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk during school hours and will be under the full control and supervision of a trained adult.
- The adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor each situation carefully, e.g. if the dog is surrounded by many students, it could become nervous and agitated.
- The owner of the dog is responsible for ensuring that the dog has access to off-site facilities on a regular basis and is responsible for clearing up any dog excrement and disposing of it appropriately.
- The dog will be included in all emergency procedures.

### **Students will be told:**

- What appropriate behaviour is around a dog. Students will be asked to remain calm when with the dog and will be asked to move away if they do not follow instructions given to them by the appropriate adult. Future access to the dog will be dependent on appropriate behaviour.
- That dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that a dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling, are all signs that a dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog displays any of these warning signs they will be removed from that situation or environment immediately.
- Not to go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- To be careful to stroke the dog on their body, chest, or back and not by their face or on the top of their head.
- To wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Not to play roughly with the dog.
- Not to eat near the dog.

### **Administration**

- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the therapy or 'dog mentor' dog.
- Reception staff will know the whereabouts of any dog on site and which staff are responsible for supervising it.

- If there is a report of an issue with a dog on site, this information will be passed to a senior member of staff as soon as possible.

#### 4. Reasons to Have a Dog in School

Academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in a school environment can achieve the following:

- Improve academic achievement
- Increase literacy skills
- Calm behaviours
- Increase social skills and self-esteem
- Increase confidence
- Teach responsibility and respect for all life
- Help prevent truancy
- Motivate students who are often less attentive

The following information has been taken from a range of sources provided by [The Dog Mentor](#) and provides further detail about the benefits of having a dog in school.

##### **Behaviour**

In some schools, dogs are making a difference in the behaviour of students. 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. Additionally, parents/carers reported that children seemed more interested in school because of having a dog at school.

##### **Attendance**

Case study: Alice was a student with poor attendance and truancy. Alice was encouraged back into school using caring for Jock, a dog, as an incentive.

##### **Education**

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. 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.

##### **Social Development**

A dog in school can 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.

## **Mental Health Support**

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. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

## **5. Assistance Dogs**

We permit visitors the use of an 'Assistance Dog ' by prior arrangement. Assistance dogs are dogs that have been highly trained to carry out a range of tasks and alerts that support a disabled person or person with a long-term medical condition. Examples include a guide dog that guides a visually impaired person, and a medical alert dog that alerts a person to an oncoming medical episode so that they can get to a safe environment to take medication. Please use this [link](#) for further guidance.