

School Dog policy

Earl Soham Community Primary School



Approved by:
Nicole Gaunt (Chair of Governors)

Date: 02/10/25

Last reviewed on: October 2025

Next review due by: October 2027

School Dog Policy/Guidelines

Purpose

Dogs teach children responsibility. Having to remember to feed, provide water and show support for a dog can give children a sense of importance and satisfaction that they can't get from school or other chores. The relationship that develops can be life-changing for a child and a great support system as they themselves continue to grow and develop.

Dogs teach children patience. Dogs do not always do as they are told first time!

Dogs teach children compassion. Just like humans, dogs feel emotion and pain. They are prone to injuries and the infirmities of age during their relatively short lives.

Dogs teach children about socialisation. Like most of us, dogs are social animals who enjoy and need attention and affection. By learning how to interact with a dog, children can learn how to better socialise with other children.

Dogs are fun. Last, but certainly not least, dogs are a lot of fun. They greet you with a wagging tail every day and can cheer you up even on your worst day.

Literacy 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>)

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>)

Introducing Waffle, Adora and Connie

Waffle has lived with Mrs Carlyle and her family since she was 9 weeks old. She is now 7 years old. She is very much a family dog but with the right temperament to work with a wide range of children and adults within the school environment. Waffle is a calm and well-behaved dog. She is a miniature labradoodle, a breed well-known for their positive temperament and behaviour around children. Adora is a flat coated retriever and is a member of the Carlyle family. She is very friendly and loves visiting the children at school. Adora is placid and gentle with the smaller children as well really enjoying playing retrieve with the older ones! Connie is a German Shepherd who has lived with Mrs Exton since she was a puppy. She is very calm, well behaved and enjoys spending time with the Year 5 and 6 class. As well as attending training classes, Connie is also trained in agility.

Principles

The headteacher, Jen Carlyle, and Chairs of Governor, Nicole Gaunt, agree to the school dogs ("Waffle, Adora and Connie") working in the school

Only the school dogs are allowed on the premises. All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the headteacher has approved their presence prior to the visit.

Waffle is a Labradoodle chosen because she is well behaved, calm, sociable and friendly. Adora is a flat coated retriever who is well behaved, calm and loving. Connie is a German Shepherd who is friendly, calm and brilliantly behaved!

Waffle and Adora's legal owner is Mrs Carlyle. Mrs Carlyle has full responsibility for the welfare of the Waffle and Adora and all expenses relating to pet insurance, food and other expenses and ensuring that the dog is vaccinated, wormed and flea treated. Connie is owned by Mrs. Exton and she takes full legal and financial responsibility for her.

Mrs Carlyle has produced a risk assessment for the dogs which will be reviewed annually and is available to view on the website .

The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Mrs Carlyle, Mrs Exton or other trained staff members.

Mrs Carlyle and Mrs Exton have liability insurance for the dogs which covers the school for risks related to a working dogs on site.

Staff, parents and students have been informed in writing that dogs will be in school.

Parents can indicate that their child is not allowed to interact with the dog by emailing clarecotton@earlsoham.suffolk.sch.uk or calling 01728 685359 to inform the office.

The presence of a school dog is signposted to visitors at reception and on the school website. Office staff will relay visitor issues to the headteacher as soon as possible

Guidelines to interaction with the School Dog

Under no circumstances will children have close interaction with the school dog unless the school has permission from parents/carers. Once permission has been given, no child shall be forced into interaction with the school dog if this makes them feel unhappy in any way. At all times interaction with the school dog must be controlled and safe for adults, children and the dog herself. If the

following guidelines are not followed, interaction with the school dog will be cancelled. At all times of interaction there must be an authorised adult who takes the leading role when interacting with the school dog. If children, or visiting adults, do not abide by the guidance given by the authorised adult, the interaction will be cancelled.

The following guidelines must be followed when interacting with the school dog. These guidelines apply to all adults and children.

- Never enter the school dog's room (Mrs Carlyle's office) without an authorised adult
- If the door to the school dog's room is shut make sure you knock and wait for the authorised adult to let you in. Never let yourself in as the school dog might not be ready.
- There must be an authorised adult present during all interaction
- Always approach the school dog calmly (voice and movement)
- Always approach the school dog slowly
- Never run up to the school dog
- To start interaction the back of a hand will be offered for the school dog to sniff
- Keep noise levels low during interaction with the school dog
- All interaction must remain calm with the authorised adult staying in control at all times
- Only the authorised adult can move any of the school dog's resources, including food and treats
- Visiting children and adults can only handle equipment if the authorising adult gives permission
- Whilst the school dog is new to the school no visiting adult or children will give her any food/treats
- There must not be any interaction with the school dog whilst she is eating
- After all interaction with the school dog, hands must be washed with soap and water/ hand gel
- When interacting with the school dog, all children must remain on their feet and not kneel or lay down unless guided to by the authorised adult
- If the school dog is with an authorised adult she does not need to be on her lead when in school.

As the school dog becomes more established there will be times when interaction will take place outside. On these occasions the following guidelines apply in addition to the guidelines outlined above

- No children will ever be asked to pick up faeces
- If walking the school dog, an authorised adult must be present at all times. Children may hold the school dog's lead if they are confident to do so. The authorised adult remains in charge of the situation at all times and will take back the school dog's lead if necessary